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ABSTRACT

This guide suggests strategies to help states, districts, and schools overcome barriers that keep homeless children and youth from getting the education to which they are entitled, presenting approaches for helping them achieve the same high standards expected of all children. The promising practices all come from states and districts that have placed a strong emphasis on enrolling homeless children and youth in school and helping them succeed. This study involved three states (Illinois, Oregon, and Texas) and six school districts (Baltimore County, Maryland; Buck's County, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Santa Cruz, California; and Victoria, Texas). Researchers interviewed state coordinators of homeless education by telephone and visited the six districts to gather information about their programs. This report discusses educating homeless children and youth (the challenges this study addresses and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act); roles and responsibilities of state coordinators (e.g., raise awareness, disseminate information, and evaluate effectiveness); and promising practices from other state-level players, districts, and schools (e.g., awareness raising, immediate enrollment, transportation, and outreach). Four appendices present promising practices highlights, organizations and advocacy groups, recent publications, and questions and answers on the education of homeless children and youth. (SM)

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THE EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM: LEARNING TO SUCCEED

Volume II: Educating Homeless Children and Youth: A Resource Guide to Promising Practices

FINAL REPORT

2002

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THE EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM: LEARNING TO SUCCEED

Volume II: Educating Homeless Children and Youth: A Resource Guide to Promising Practices

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY I

EDUCATING HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH:
A Resource Guide to Promising Practices 1
The Challenges This Study Addresses 2
The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 4

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STATE COORDINATORS: PROMISING PRACTICES 8
Raise Awareness with Assessment, Technical Assistance, and Training 9
Cast a Broad Net to Disseminate Information 13
Take Every Opportunity to Collaborate and Coordinate with Others 14
Evaluate and Monitor with an Eye Toward Program Improvement 18

PROMISING PRACTICES FROM OTHER STATE-LEVEL PLAYERS, DISTRICTS, AND SCHOOLS 22
Awareness Raising 22
Immediate Enrollment 30
Transportation 34
In-school and Related Services 42
Outreach To Youth 47

CONCLUSIONS: SOME CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES 50

APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Promising Practices Highlights A-1
Appendix B: Organizations and Advocacy Groups B-1
Appendix C: Selected Recent Publications C-1
Appendix D: Questions and Answers Guide on the Education of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations: Special Education and the Homeless Student D-1

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We extend our sincere thanks to those whom we interviewed in Illinois, Oregon, and Texas. We also wish to thank the many people we visited in: (1) Baltimore County, Maryland; (2) Bucks County, Pennsylvania; (3) Chicago, Illinois; (4) Fort Wayne, Indiana; (5) Santa Cruz, California; and (6) Victoria, Texas. They were eager to contribute to this effort to share promising practices among those who serve homeless children and youth, and they graciously took time out of their very busy schedules to talk with us.

We also wish to thank those who helped us select states and districts to include in our sample and those who thoughtfully provided us with suggestions about what to include in this guide. These include: Steve Berg at the National Alliance to End Homelessness; Diana Bowman at the National Center for Homeless Education; Barbara Duffield at the National Coalition for the Homeless; Sally McCarthy at the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty; Miriam Rollin at the National Network for Youth; and Walter Varner at the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

Executive Summary

Overview of the Resource Guide

This guide suggests strategies and processes that states, districts, and schools can use to overcome some of the many barriers that keep homeless children and youth from getting the education to which they are entitled. It also presents approaches for helping them to achieve the same high standards expected of all children. The promising practices the guide describes all come from states and districts that have placed a strong emphasis on enrolling homeless children and youth in school and helping them to be successful students. Others can put some of these strategies to use in their own states and districts.

The search for promising practices focused on a small number of places where such practices were particularly likely to be found. We looked in three states and six school districts, all of which were recommended by current research literature and national experts in the field of educating homeless children and youth.[1] The three states included: Illinois, Oregon, and Texas. The districts included: Baltimore County, Maryland; Bucks County, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Santa Cruz, California; and Victoria, Texas. We interviewed state coordinators of homeless education by telephone. A team of researchers visited the six districts to gather detailed information about programs for homeless children and youth.

This resource guide begins with an overview of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, the first and sole major federal legislative response to homelessness. It also describes:

- The key roles and responsibilities of state coordinators of homeless education programs and examples of promising practices to build a strong statewide support system for homeless education;
- Promising practices that other state-level players (e.g., coalitions, legislatures), as well as districts and schools, can use to educate homeless children and youth;

Appendices provide quick access to information and resources, including:

- Promising practices highlights in states and districts, with contact information
- An annotated list of organizations and advocacy groups interested in the education of homeless children and youth, with descriptions of on-line resources and links to additional resources;
- A bibliography of recent publications that report on education-related issues affecting homeless children and youth;
- Selected questions and answers regarding special education and the homeless student.

The Challenges This Resource Guide Addresses

When children and youth move frequently, or when they have no stable home base, attending school is difficult. There are challenges for students and challenges for the school districts, schools, and states working to serve them. Strategies aimed at five of the most common challenges are detailed in this guide. These include:

- Awareness raising. State coordinators of homeless education report that many educators, as well as members of the general public, remain unaware of the serious consequences of homelessness for school-age children and youth. As one coordinator observed about homeless students, "...these students are invisible -- they do not exist."[2] In order to identify, enroll, and educate homeless students, the general public and district and school staff at all levels and in all capacities need to understand the rights and needs of homeless students and their families, as well as the services available to them.

- Immediate enrollment. School records requirements make enrolling in school a problem for many homeless students. States have made significant progress in resolving issues having to do with immunization records for homeless students. Nevertheless, schools and other agencies remain apprehensive about eliminating the usual requirement for documents (e.g., birth certificate, court records) that prove a student has a parent\legal guardian who accepts responsibility for the child. Further, when academic records such as grades and test scores are not transferred from one school to another, students may not be placed in the appropriate education programs.

- Transportation. Transportation remains the major enrollment barrier for homeless children and youth.[3] Often, homeless students cannot immediately get access to district transportation because shelters, motels, campgrounds, the homes of relatives and friends, and other temporary housing are not on regular district bus routes. Homeless students in rural communities and communities without public transportation have even fewer transportation alternatives from which to choose. When they move across school and district boundaries, transportation problems often force homeless students to change schools, thus disrupting relationships with teachers and classmates.

- In-school and related services. Homeless students are at a disadvantage in terms of access to school services that supplement the standard educational program. State coordinators report that these students have difficulty receiving services such as gifted and talented education, special education, Head Start, and other publicly funded preschool programs, even when they qualify for these programs.[4] Transportation problems make it even more difficult for homeless students to participate in before- and after-school activities such as tutoring, clubs, sports, and counseling. Furthermore, homeless students often need school supplies that their families can't afford, and they may need referrals for health and social services to address problems that can prevent their success in school.

- Outreach to youth. Identifying and enrolling homeless youth, who by legislative definition are between the ages of 12 and 18, poses special challenges. This population includes runaways and other highly mobile students, some of whom purposefully avoid being identified and avoid school.[5] State coordinators report that homeless youth "remain hidden and, as a result, are difficult to identify, and therefore, to serve." Those

youth who do attend school may still have difficulty meeting the attendance and course requirements necessary for graduation, particularly if they change schools or districts frequently during the school year.[6]

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (PL 100-77), as amended, contains nine titles that cover a range of services to homeless people. Subtitle VII authorizes four programs, one of which is the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program. Congress established the EHCY program in response to reports that more than half of homeless children were not regularly attending school.[7] As amended in 1994, the EHCY program mandates that states take action to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education as their non-homeless peers.

Roles and Responsibilities of State Coordinators: Promising Practices

Every state has a coordinator for homeless education. Interviews with the three state coordinators in this study provide information on many promising ways to meet the goals of the McKinney Act. Specifically, state coordinators can:

- Raise awareness with assessment, technical assistance, and training. Two effective strategies are to assess current awareness and provide technical assistance and training to district and school personnel. Assessing educators' awareness of homeless education issues, rights, resources, and services is a smart first step toward developing strategic activities that target areas of greatest need. Identifying homeless children and youth is a crucial step to ensure that these students enroll in school and have the opportunity to reach high academic standards. Many districts are not aware that they have homeless students; nor do they know which children to count as "homeless."[8]

- Cast a broad net to disseminate information. State coordinators can maintain close contact with school districts, service providers, and advocates and provide them with useful information, such as guidance on the McKinney Act, changes in the law itself, or related policies that can effect the education of homeless children and youth. State coordinators communicate information in various ways, including through statewide newsletters, e-mail listservs, statewide hotlines, and direct calls to districts. The coordinators with whom we spoke try to use as many different means of communication as possible.

- Take every opportunity to collaborate and coordinate with others. Specifically, state coordinators suggest collaborating with district and school staff, local departments of transportation and local youth-serving organizations and agencies to provide innovative in-school and related services and coordinating funds to provide in-school and related services to more homeless students.

- Evaluate and monitor with an eye toward program improvement. State coordinators are required to gather information on homeless children and youth in their state and report findings to the United States Department of Education once every three years. In our

sample of states, we uncovered promising strategies to collect high-quality data and use the data for program improvement.

Promising Practices from Other State-Level Players, Districts, and Schools

Awareness Raising

To begin the process of awareness raising at the local level, district and school liaisons can: (1) conduct a local needs assessment, (2) target a wide audience, (3) target a full range of staff positions including district personnel, teachers, and bus drivers and make attendance at awareness-raising activities mandatory, and (4) develop awareness-raising materials to disseminate widely. District and school staff can also keep parents informed about their children's legal rights to immediate enrollment and provide advice on what to do when moving (e.g., notify the school of departure to begin records transfer, request a copy of all school and immunization records).

Immediate Enrollment

To ensure that homeless children and youth can enroll in school immediately, districts can minimize enrollment barriers through policy (e.g., develop district policy and/or look to relevant state policy). They can also use a systematic process for records transfer and assign a staff member the responsibility to oversee this process. Many have found that when a liaison or other specified contact person leads a homeless student through the enrollment process -- going with the student from the shelter to the school and completing forms and requirements, such as a doctor's appointment if immunization records cannot be found -- the length of time it takes to access a student's records decreases significantly.

Transportation

To identify the transportation needs of homeless children and youth, communicate these needs to the right person, and resolve problems, states and districts can: (1) develop state law and policy to clarify the McKinney Act provisions, (2) develop local transportation policy that facilitates the attendance of homeless students, (3) collaborate with the local department of transportation to provide the most appropriate transportation to homeless students, and (4) develop a systematic process to meet transportation needs of these children.

The McKinney Act's guidance on all matters related to the transportation of homeless children and youth is not always clear. For example, the McKinney Act does not address: (1) exactly how long a homeless student may remain in the school of origin; (2) who is responsible for transporting homeless students across district lines; or (3) procedures for filing and resolving enrollment disputes. Furthermore, many district administrators may not be aware of the McKinney Act and its provisions at all.[9] State law and policy can not only increase awareness of transportation issues among school and shelter staff in non-McKinney districts but also clarify the gray areas of the McKinney Act.

In-school and Related Services

To help ensure that homeless children and youth have access to the in-school and related services that they need, districts can: (1) accurately identify the need for programs and services by identifying homeless children and youth, (2) ensure access through policies that make clear what programs and services homeless children and youth are entitled to, and (3) create networks and partnerships to stretch resources. A smart first step in providing in-school services to homeless students is to determine the extent of the need for particular services by, for example, conducting a school survey. Once need is determined, districts can stretch resources by developing a network of service providers and developing local partnerships.

Outreach to Youth

To specifically address the problems that homeless youth face, districts can: (1) collaborate and coordinate with local youth-serving organizations/programs, and (2) form a multi-disciplinary team. Establishing and maintaining contact with local youth-serving organizations and programs can increase the chances of identifying and enrolling homeless youth in school. Multi-disciplinary teams, that may include the juvenile officer for the local police department, a narcotics officer, a social worker, and a mental health outreach worker, for example, can provide homeless youth with the supports that some may need to re-engage in school or to get a job.

Conclusions: Some Cross-Cutting Strategies

Looking across this sample of states and districts, promising strategies that meet challenges across a range of issues that homeless children and youth confront every day include: (1) developing law and policy to strengthen and reinforce the McKinney Act, (2) appointing a homeless liaison for every district, (3) collaborating to maximize district resources, and (4) creating a comprehensive and coordinated homeless education program. Homeless students will be best served when promising practices are implemented as part of a comprehensive and coordinated homeless education program. Promising practices that are implemented in isolation are likely to result in some homeless students falling between the cracks. A homeless education program can align and integrate the efforts of all stakeholders, and do so in a systemic, planned, and sustainable way. The ultimate success of any homeless education program requires that the efforts of many individuals are coordinated and measured by whether all homeless students are identified, enrolled, and educated appropriately.

* * * *

This guide describes promising practices that state coordinators for homeless education and other state, district, and school staff can use to meet the requirements of the McKinney Act, as well as some of

the most pressing challenges to enrolling homeless children and youth in school and providing them with the supports they need to reach the same high standards as others. Although success in meeting these challenges rarely comes easily, when it does come, it is well worth the effort in improving the lives of these vulnerable children, youth, and families.

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[1] The states and districts included in this guide were selected based on (1) the recommendations of experts in the field, (2) current literature, (3) geographic diversity, and (4) location in a mix of urban, suburban, and rural districts.

[2] National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and the National Coalition for the Homeless. (1999). *Making the grade: Successes and challenges in providing educational opportunities to homeless children and youth* (page 7). Washington, DC: National Coalition for the Homeless.

[3] Phillips, C.M., Wodatch, J.K., & Kelliher, C.T. (forthcoming). *Access and achievement: Reducing barriers for homeless children and youth. A Follow-up Study to the 1995 National Evaluation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program* (page 8). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[4] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 33.

[5] National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and the National Coalition for the Homeless,1999, 8.

[6] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 12.

[7] National Coalition for the Homeless. (1999, June). *Education of homeless children and youth*. (NCH Fact Sheet # 10) [On Line]. Available: http://nch.ari.net/edchild.html.

[8] Phillips et al., forthcoming, v.

[9] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 23.

Educating Homeless Children and Youth: A Resource Guide to Promising Practices

This guide suggests strategies and processes that states, districts, and schools can use to overcome some of the many barriers that keep homeless children and youth from getting the education to which they are entitled. The guide describes promising practices that some states and districts have implemented to enroll homeless children and youth in school. It also presents approaches for helping them to achieve the same high standards expected of all children. We know that others can put some of these strategies to use in their own states and districts.

Children and youth are a fast growing segment of the homeless population. Estimates vary because of the difficulties in accurately counting homeless children. The *Year 2000 Report to Congress* on the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program indicates that:

- The number of homeless children and youth (PreK-12) increased 10 percent from approximately 841,721 reported in 1997 to 928,429 reported in 2000, while the overall population of PreK-12 children increased only 2 percent during this time period.
- The largest numbers of homeless children are PreK-6 aged children, comprising approximately 65 percent of the homeless children and youth population.
- Approximately 87 percent of school age homeless children and youth (K-12) are enrolled in school; 13 percent are not enrolled. Year 2000 data show that approximately 77 percent of school age homeless children and youth (K-12) attend school regularly; almost one-quarter (23 percent) of homeless children do not. These data show a significant improvement from the 1997 data that reported only 55 percent of school age homeless children and youth attended school regularly.
- Only 15 percent of preschool age homeless children are enrolled in school programs. These data suggest that preschool age homeless children are greatly underserved by homeless education programs.[1]

Further, the most recent *United States Conference of Mayors Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities* indicates that requests for emergency shelter by homeless families with children increased in almost three-quarters of cities surveyed in 2000. Across these cities, the average increase in requests was 17 percent.[2] Half of those cities report that people are homeless for a longer period of time than was true in past years.[3] Research indicates that these problems are also prevalent in rural areas.[4]

In order to focus our search for promising practices in a small number of places where promising practices were particularly likely to be found, we looked in three states and six school districts across six

states, all of which were recommended by current research literature and national experts in the field of educating homeless children and youth.[5] The three states included: Illinois, Oregon, and Texas. The districts included: Baltimore County, Maryland; Bucks County, Pennsylvania; Chicago, Illinois; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Santa Cruz, California; and Victoria, Texas. In our search we interviewed state coordinators of homeless education by telephone, and a team of researchers visited the six districts to gather detailed information about programs for homeless children and youth.

The promising practices described here are but a few; many other states and districts could, no doubt, contribute their own success stories. We have, in a few instances, included promising practices from sites that, although not in our study sample, help to illustrate a particular point.

This resource guide begins with an overview of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the first and, to date, the sole major federal legislative response to homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act has been amended five times. For the most part, the amendments expanded the scope and strengthened the provisions of the original legislation.[6] In addition, Congress has recently changed the name of the Act from the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The resource guide also describes:

- The key roles and responsibilities of state coordinators of homeless education programs and examples of promising practices to build a strong statewide support system for homeless education
- Promising practices that other state-level players (e.g., coalitions, legislatures), as well as districts and schools, use to educate homeless children and youth

The guide includes appendices that provide quick access to information and resources:

- Promising practices highlights in the states and districts included in this guide, with contact information
- An annotated list of organizations and advocacy groups interested in the education of homeless children and youth, with descriptions of on-line resources and links to additional resources
- A bibliography including recent publications that report on education-related issues affecting homeless children and youth
- Selected questions and answers regarding special education and the homeless student

The Challenges This Study Addresses

- **Awareness raising**
- **Immediate enrollment**
- **Transportation**
- **Providing in-school and related services**
- **Outreach to youth**

When children and youth move frequently, attending school is difficult for many reasons. There are challenges for students and challenges for the school districts, schools, and even states working to serve them. Strategies aimed at five of the most common challenges are detailed in this guide:

Awareness Raising

State coordinators of homeless education programs report that many educators, as well as members of the general public, remain unaware of the serious consequences of homelessness for school-age children and youth. As one coordinator observed about homeless students, "...these students are invisible -- they do not exist."[7] In order to identify, enroll, and educate homeless students, the general public and district and school staff at all levels and in all capacities need to understand the rights and needs of homeless students and their families, as well as the services available to them.

Immediate Enrollment

School records requirements make enrolling in school a problem for many homeless students. States have made significant progress in resolving issues having to do with immunization records for homeless students. Nevertheless, schools and other agencies remain apprehensive about eliminating the usual requirement for documents that prove a student has a parent\legal guardian who accepts responsibility for the child. School authorities are concerned not only about liability questions, but also fear that non-homeless students would react to such a change by enrolling in schools outside of their attendance area for other reasons (e.g., the popularity of a school).[8] Further, when academic records such as grades and test scores are not transferred from one school to another, students may not be placed in the appropriate education programs.

Transportation

Transportation remains the most prominent enrollment barrier for homeless children and youth.[9] Often, homeless students cannot immediately get access to district transportation because shelters, motels, campgrounds, the homes of relatives and friends, and other temporary housing are not on regular district bus routes. Homeless students in rural communities and communities without public transportation have even fewer transportation alternatives from which to choose. When they move across school and district boundaries, transportation problems often force homeless students to change schools, thus disrupting relationships with teachers and classmates.

In-school and Related Services

Homeless students are at a disadvantage in terms of access to school services that supplement the standard educational program. State coordinators report that these students have difficulty receiving services related to gifted and talented education, special education, Head Start, and other publicly funded preschool programs, even when they qualify for these programs.[10] The lack of transportation makes it even more difficult for homeless students to participate in before- and after-school activities such as tutoring, clubs, sports, and counseling. Furthermore, homeless students often need school supplies, and they may need referrals for health and social services to address problems that can prevent their success in school.

Outreach to Youth

Identifying and enrolling homeless youth, who by legislative definition are between the ages of 12 and 18, poses special challenges. This population includes runaways and other highly mobile students, some of whom purposefully avoid being identified and avoid school.[11] State coordinators report that homeless youth "remain hidden and, as a result, are difficult to identify, and therefore, to serve." Those youth who do attend school may still have difficulty meeting the attendance and course requirements necessary for graduation, particularly if they change schools or districts frequently during the school year.[12]

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (PL 100-77) was signed into law on July 22, 1987. Its purpose was to bring to the surface and address the problems associated with homelessness in the United States. The Act was amended in 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2002. The McKinney-Vento Act

contains nine titles that cover a range of services to homeless people. Subtitle VII authorizes four programs, one of which is the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program. Congress established the EHCY program in response to reports that more than half of homeless children were not regularly attending school.[13] As amended in 1994, the EHCY program mandates that states take action to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education as their non-homeless peers. This report discusses data collected in 2000 when the 1994 reauthorization was law.

The 1994 amendments to the McKinney-Vento Act gave local education authorities increased flexibility in the use of funds appropriated under the Act, specified the rights of homeless preschoolers to a free and appropriate public preschool education, gave parents of homeless children and youth a greater voice regarding their children's school placement, and required educational authorities to coordinate with housing authorities. In 2000, Congress appropriated $28.8 million to the EHCY program and stipulated that no state appropriation could be less than $100,000.

The EHCY program awards grants to state education agencies (SEAs) to provide and coordinate services to homeless children and youth and to establish or designate a state homeless education coordinator. The state coordinator works to improve the educational access and school success of all homeless children in the state. The Office of the State Coordinator also awards subgrants to local education agencies (LEAs) to help homeless children and youth enroll in, attend, and succeed in school. Operating at a funding level of $28.8 million, the McKinney-Vento Act is a relatively small program, and the number of subgrantees receiving McKinney-Vento funds is small; approximately 4 percent of school districts nationwide receive subgrants.[14]

The McKinney-Vento Act imposes several key requirements on LEAs in participating states. An LEA must:

- Either continue the student's enrollment at the school of origin or enroll him or her in the attendance area in which he or she currently lives. In making these placement decisions the LEA should, to the extent feasible, comply with the request made by a parent or guardian regarding school selection,
- Provide homeless students with services that are comparable to those offered to other students, including transportation, school meals, and educational programs for students who are gifted and talented, have disabilities, or are limited-English proficient,
- LEAs that receive subgrants should coordinate with local social service and housing agencies, and
- LEAs that receive subgrants should designate a homeless liaison whose responsibilities include ensuring that the LEA responsibilities are met and that homeless students receive

the educational services to which they are entitled; however, some states require that all LEAs, including those without McKinney-Vento subgrants, designate a homeless liaison

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: The Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, which established the Education of Homeless Children and Youth program, stipulates that:

- All homeless children and youth have a right to the same, free, and appropriate public education as other children and youth, including a public preschool education.
- States must review and revise residency laws and "other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and homeless youth."
- Students must not be separated from the mainstream school environment because of their homelessness.
- Homeless students should have access to education services to enable them to meet the same challenging student performance standards to which all students are held (McKinney-Vento Act, Section 721).

Section 103(a) of the McKinney-Vento Act defines children and youth as homeless if they lack "a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." Children and youth may also be defined as homeless if their primary nighttime residence is:

- A supervised shelter (e.g., welfare hotel, congregate shelter, runaway shelter, or transitional housing for people with mental illness) designed to provide temporary accommodations,
- An institution (other than a jail or prison) that provides temporary accommodations for people who are intended to be institutionalized, for example, children who are in the care of the state and are between foster families, or
- A place not designed for, or regularly used as, sleeping accommodations for people.

Other homeless children and youth such as migrant children, those living in foster care, children of "doubled-up families" who share a living space, and those who live in trailer parks or camping areas may or may not be classified as homeless. States can assess cases individually, using such criteria as whether these living arrangements are voluntary.

[1] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program. (2000). *Report to Congress: Fiscal Year 2000* (page 8). Washington, DC: Author.

[2] Lowe, 2000, 39.

[3] Lowe, 2000, 42.

[4] Vissing, Y. (1996). *Out of sight, out of mind: Homeless children and families in small town America*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.

[5] The states and districts included in this guide were selected based on (1) the recommendations of experts in the field, (2) current literature, (3) geographic diversity, and (4) location in a mix of urban, suburban, and rural districts.

[6] National Coalition for the Homeless. (1999, April). *The McKinney-Vento Act* (NCH Fact Sheet # 18) [On Line]. Available: http://nch.ari.net/McKinney-Ventofacts.html.

[7] National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and the National Coalition for the Homeless. (1999). *Making the grade: Successes and challenges in providing educational opportunities to homeless children and youth* (page 7). Washington, DC: National Coalition for the Homeless.

[8] Phillips, C.M., Wodatch, J.K., & Kelliher, C.T. (forthcoming). *Access and achievement: Reducing barriers for homeless children and youth* (page 10). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[9] Phillips et al, forthcoming, 8.

[10] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 33.

[11] National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and the National Coalition for the Homeless,1999, 8.

[12] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 12.

[13] National Coalition for the Homeless. (1999, June). *Education of homeless children and youth*. (NCH Fact Sheet # 10) [On Line]. Available: http://nch.ari.net/edchild.html.

[14] Statistics provided by the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program office, April 2000.

Roles and Responsibilities of State Coordinators: Promising Practices

- **Raise awareness with assessment, technical assistance, and training**
- **Cast a broad net to disseminate information**
- **Take every opportunity to collaborate with others**
- **Evaluate and monitor with an eye toward program improvement**

The McKinney-Vento Act: Responsibilities of the State Coordinator

The McKinney-Vento Act requires state coordinators to:

- Develop and carry out the state plan
- Facilitate coordination between the SEA, the state social services agency, and other agencies serving homeless families
- Develop relationships with relevant education, child development or preschool programs, and other service providers in order to coordinate and improve the provision of comprehensive services to homeless families
- Collect and submit information to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) every three years on (1) the estimated number of homeless children and youth in their state and the number of these being served directly with McKinney-Vento funds; (2) the nature and extent of the problems of homeless children and youth in gaining access to public preschools and elementary and secondary schools; (3) the difficulties in identifying the special needs of homeless children and youth; (4) any progress made by the SEA and LEAs in addressing such problems and difficulties; and (5) program success in allowing homeless children and youth to enroll, attend, and succeed in school

Source: Title VII, SubTitle B, of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 11431 et. Seq.

Although only 4 percent of school districts receive McKinney-Vento funds, every state has a coordinator for homeless education. In broad terms, state coordinators identify homeless children and youth and build support systems for school districts to serve them effectively. Interviews with the three state coordinators in this study provided information on many promising ways to meet the goals of the McKinney-Vento Act. Specifically, these coordinators shared promising practices they use to:

- Raise awareness about homeless children and youth
- Disseminate information
- Collaborate and coordinate with other organizations and agencies, and
- Evaluate and monitor McKinney-Vento subgrantees

Raise Awareness with Assessment, Technical Assistance, and Training

- **Assess current awareness**
- **Use technical assistance to identify homeless children and youth**
- **Use technical assistance to ensure access to in-school and related services**
- **Train for self advocacy**

Staffs of state departments of education, districts, and schools, as well as community members, vary in their awareness of homeless issues -- including those related to the definition, condition, needs, and rights of homeless children and youth.[1] Lack of awareness can result in barriers that delay or prevent homeless children and youth from enrolling in school. Homeless parents themselves are often unaware of their children's rights or their own rights. Furthermore, school staff who are unfamiliar with the conditions of homelessness may be unresponsive to homeless students' educational needs and insensitive to the everyday challenges they face.

State coordinators we interviewed expend considerable energy on awareness raising. Two effective strategies are to:

- Assess current awareness
- Provide technical assistance and training to district and school personnel.

Assess Current Awareness

Assessing educators' awareness of homeless education issues, rights, resources, and services is a smart first step toward developing strategic activities that target areas of greatest need. For example, Illinois' state coordinator surveyed the state's 900 district superintendents to gauge their awareness of federal and state laws that address homeless education, as well as related services and issues. Following this first survey, the coordinator undertook many outreach and informational activities to raise awareness in the areas in which superintendents lacked knowledge and understanding. After administering the survey a second time nearly two years later, this state coordinator now says, "We saw a significant rise in awareness after two years. The survey showed that people in schools and districts are much more aware. I am confident now that if you ask any superintendent about homeless education, he or she will at least know that there is some legislation and guidance out there that addresses it."

Use Technical Assistance to Identify Homeless Children and Youth

Identifying homeless children and youth is another crucial step in ensuring that these students enroll in school and have the opportunity to reach high academic standards. Many districts are not aware that they have homeless students; nor do they know which children to count as "homeless."[2] Noting the importance of providing technical assistance and training on this topic, the state coordinators we interviewed offered two effective means:

- Developing written guidance
- Presenting at statewide conferences

Developing written guidance. One way that state coordinators can train others to identify homeless children and youth is to provide written guidance about exactly who is homeless. For example, in January 2000 Oregon's state coordinator published a manual entitled *Admission of Students to Oregon Public Schools: Guidance for Schools and Districts*. Incorporating the non-regulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education on McKinney-Vento Act provisions, the guidance provides district and school personnel with legal references and policy guidelines to determine student eligibility for admission to school. The manual includes a section addressing special populations, with guidance for identifying homeless youth in particular. It also includes a question-and-answer section, based on best practices, to address some of the reluctance among school staff and principals to enroll homeless youth. Among the questions addressed are:

Oregon:
Technical Assistance to Identify Homeless Children and Youth

Admission of Students to Oregon Public Schools: Guidance for Schools and Districts defines what is meant by:

- Homeless and temporarily housed students
- Unsupervised, abandoned, emancipated*, and runaway youth
- Highly mobile, migrant, and immigrant children and youth

The manual also defines possible living arrangements for homeless children and youth as:

- Transitional or emergency shelters
- Trailer parks, campgrounds, vehicles
- Inadequate housing
- Doubled-up housing and overcrowded conditions
- Motels, hotels, and apartments with short-term rates

* Under Oregon law, youth ages 16-17 may become "emancipated" from parents or legal guardians through a juvenile court procedure. Emancipated youths have been deemed by a judge to be capable of independent living and of making decisions such as those related to public school enrollment. Legally emancipated youths are considered residents in the district in which they reside, irrespective of the residence of their parents or legal guardians.

- What is the responsibility of a school district to admit school-age children and youth located in the district who do not have a permanent in-district address or who are not supervised by a parent or legal guardian?
- What should school personnel do if they suspect or know the youth to be a runaway?
- Can a school require documentation such as a recent receipt or a utility bill to prove that a child or youth is a resident of the district for school admissions purposes?
- Should an unaccompanied homeless student be allowed to participate in field trips for which a signed parent permission slip is a prerequisite?
- If a youth admitted to school becomes ill or is injured at school, and school personnel either take the child to the hospital or call for an ambulance, is the school district responsible for the medical costs incurred?
- What should educators do if a homeless youth attempting to enroll is known to have been expelled from another school for possession of a weapon?

Oregon is revising the manual after feedback from districts, and it is likely to expand it to cover issues related to adjudicated youth. School and district staff will be able to access the new edition on the Web, along with links to other resources that can assist in enrolling homeless students.

Statewide Conferences Reach a Wide Audience

The Texas state coordinator teaches district staff how to identify homeless students at statewide conferences for:

- The Parent-Teacher Association
- The Association of School Social Workers
- All regional educational service centers
- School superintendents
- The associations of school boards, school nurses, and school secretaries
- Head Start
- The Texas Homeless Network (a statewide organization that provides technical assistance to direct service providers and individual members across Texas)

Presenting at statewide conferences and local workshops. Another method by which state coordinators can familiarize school staff with homelessness issues is to present information at statewide conferences of other federal or state education programs or advocacy groups. Texas' state coordinator

gets on the program at statewide conferences to raise awareness of issues related to homeless children and youth, including how to identify them.

Oregon's coordinator has conducted interstate workshops to address the movement of homeless families between California, Oregon, and Washington. She also conducts about 25 district workshops a year to help staff learn how to identify homeless children and youth.

Technical Assistance to Ensure Access to a Free Appropriate Public Education

The Texas state coordinator recently published *Questions and Answers Guide on the Education of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations* (1999). The guide specifically addresses special education services in Texas and answers many questions that district and school staff in that State are likely to ask in deciding whether a homeless student is eligible to participate in the program. It also describes when homeless students may receive expedited consideration for such services. This guidance, while specific to Texas, identifies some of the issues that States can address in their own policies and practices.

Special Education and Homeless Students: The Texas Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth (OEHCY) Answers Some Important Questions for its School Districts

- What is required of special education programs related to the education of students in homeless situations?
- Should all students experiencing homelessness be referred to special education programs?
- If a homeless student who is receiving special education services from a school district leaves the school district and enrolls in another school district, can the new school district begin providing special education services immediately?
- Can the evaluation of a homeless student's eligibility for services take precedence over pre-existing referrals of non-homeless students?
- If a homeless student moves before completing the referral and assessment process, can the student's new school district simply complete the unfinished portion of the process, or must it start over from the beginning?
- Can a homeless student under the age of 18 who has no parent or legal guardian participate in special education?
- If a physically disabled homeless student is initially assigned to a campus that is not equipped for his or her special education needs, what is the maximum length of time that may pass before the school district must transport that student to another school?

* See Appendix D for responses to these questions. Also, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) answers these and many more related questions in a *Policy Forum Proceedings* document dated December 5-7, 1999 (contact www.nasdse.org). The guidance in these documents is based upon a combination of federal and state law.

Train for Self Advocacy

As previously noted, while every state has a homeless coordinator, not every district receives subgrants. As a result, many districts do not designate homeless program liaisons. In Texas, for example, the state coordinator notes that, with more than 1,000 districts in the state, many school staff, service providers, and homeless parents lack the knowledge and skills to quickly resolve problems that affect school enrollment and success for homeless children and youth. She believes in "training individuals to advocate on their own behalf ... to ensure that 'fires' at all levels are put out quickly." Consequently, when an advocate or homeless student calls the state homeless information hot-line with a problem (e.g., not being allowed to enroll in a particular school), they leave the conversation armed with the information they need to take care of the situation at hand. The coordinator explained that local advocates can pressure local communities in ways that state officials can't. "It is much more meaningful when a constituent -- rather than someone from the state office -- gets up at a school board meeting and talks about what works and what needs changing," she said. She noted further that becoming an advocate for oneself means that, when a homeless parent or student moves to another district or state, they know how to access the information and services they need.

Learning to Be One's Own Advocate

The Texas state coordinator believes in training homeless individuals to "*be their own advocate.*" One good reason to do this, she explained, is that "*sometimes when state homeless education staff calls a school to correct a problem, the school will take out their frustrations on the student or family....*" The coordinator explained that school staff may decide that the student or family member went over the district's head to the state: "*So I encourage them to be their own advocate. Still, if the student or family member is uncomfortable making that call, I make it clear that I will make it for them.*"

Cast a Broad Net to Disseminate Information

The state coordinators we interviewed try to maintain close contact with school districts, service providers, and advocates and to provide them with useful information, such as guidance on the McKinney-Vento Act, changes in the law itself, or related policies that can affect the education of homeless children and youth. State coordinators communicate information in various ways, including through statewide newsletters, e-mail

A Statewide Hotline Can Answer Many Questions

The Texas state coordinator manages the 1-800 hotline, which anyone may call for information on how to assist a homeless child or youth. The hotline receives many inquiries, as well as calls from those who wish to volunteer. In this case, hotline staff ask in which community the caller resides and directs them to the district homeless liaison. If there is no homeless education project in that community, the coordinator assists the caller or refers the caller to the statewide homeless coalition for further assistance.

listservs, statewide hotlines, and direct calls to districts. The coordinators with whom we spoke try to use as many different means of communication as possible. In Texas, for example:

- All schools have e-mail access to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and are required to check the TEA website regularly. (TEA no longer sends many types of information via paper communications to districts.) The coordinator posts important information related to homeless education on this website.
- All homeless program liaisons have e-mail access, and the coordinator contacts them regularly to "check in and keep touch." The coordinator also e-mails information about relevant policy and law affecting homeless children and youth to all subgrantees.
- The OEHCY publishes at least one article for each issue of the bi-monthly *Texas Homeless Network News*, which is disseminated on-line as well as in hard copy, to more than 2,000 readers

Take Every Opportunity to Collaborate and Coordinate with Others

- **Collaborate to provide innovative in-school and related services**
- **Coordinate funds to provide in-school and related services to more homeless students**

The McKinney-Vento Act directs the state homeless education program to coordinate activities with the SEA and with other agencies and organizations that serve homeless children and youth. The state coordinators we interviewed think that collaborating with others is essential in a successful homeless education program. Collaboration enhances educators' ability to:

> *"[Collaboration] attacks [homelessness] in a bigger way, in the larger context of poverty."*
>
> Oregon State Coordinator

- Provide innovative in-school and related services
- Extend the reach of McKinney-Vento dollars to provide more homeless students with in-school services

Collaborate to Provide Innovative In-school and Related Services

Texas' state coordinator has played a key role in designing the Support for Homeless Education: Linking Technology Resources to Shelters (SHELTRS) project, which gives homeless students in Austin access to information-age learning tools. Specifically, SHELTRS provides new technology resources and expands existing technology resources at eight facilities in Austin that provide shelter, educational services, or job training and employment referral services to homeless students. To get this project

started, the state coordinator convened a group to collaborate, including Austin shelter directors, staff of the University of Texas Dana Center, and representatives from private technology companies such as Microsoft and Southwestern Bell. Their meetings and joint planning eventually led to a grant award from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Telecommunications and Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (TIIAP).

A Partnership to Help Homeless Students Reach High Standards

SHELTRS provides:

- Personalized tutoring in the state-mandated curriculum (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills [TEKS]) and additional instructional time annually to more than 940 students residing in shelters
- Training so that tutors can (1) access Web resources that are directly linked to the TEKS curriculum, (2) access Web resources that help them understand homelessness and its effects on students so that they can better serve these students, and (3) perform basic computer troubleshooting to avoid lengthy down-time
- Means for tutors to communicate frequently with classroom teachers so that tutoring time is customized to student needs
- Encouragement for parents to attend tutoring sessions with their children so that they can learn basic computing skills and how to help their children with homework

Evidence of success:

- SHELTRS staff and tutors report that almost all of their students, who have no prior experience with computers, become less fearful of the technology. They also report that these students gain confidence and show more initiative to learn on their own.
- During the last quarter of 1999, the Austin Children's Shelter (one of the facilities) recorded 54 hours of tutoring on computers, and more than 82 tutoring sessions. This shelter had no tutoring on computers or using the Internet prior to its involvement with SHELTRS. The Safe Place Shelter recorded 221 tutoring sessions and instances of computer usage by children and youth in a recent three-month period.
- As of fall 2000, nearly every classroom in Austin will be wired, and OEHCY will instruct SHELTR tutors, classroom teachers, and interested parents in the use of e-mail to facilitate communication between SHELTRs projects and schools

More formal evaluations that look at homework and daily test scores and that include interviews with classroom teachers are forthcoming.

Source: [Online] http//www.tenet.edu/shelters/about.html

In addition, the coordinator collaborates with private non-profit charitable organizations to increase services that influence students' school success. One such collaboration is with Feed the Children, a national organization headquartered in Oklahoma that distributes food, clothing, and other resources to the homeless in Texas. Feed the Children contacts the coordinator regarding donations, and she in turn contacts liaisons who select families to receive the donated items. This organization, for example, once provided rent money to a family about to be evicted from their apartment.

Coordinate Funds to Provide In-school and Related Services to More Homeless Students

Coordination also offers opportunities to provide more homeless students with in-school services, both within and outside of McKinney-Vento-funded districts.

> *"Any project relying solely on McKinney-Vento funding for support is on shaky ground, fiscally as well as qualitatively. Collaboration is essential not only to good community program management -- it is vital to resource development and long term financial security."*
>
> Oregon State Coordinator

Title I can serve homeless students. Oregon's homeless coordinator combines McKinney-Vento funds with Title I funds through the Title I, Part A Set-asides Initiative. Although Title I mandates that funds be reserved to serve homeless children, some Title I program directors remain unaware of this requirement. Others are not aware of the existence of homeless students in their school district or are unsure exactly which children count as "homeless."[3] The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) ensures that shelter count data (produced twice annually by the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department) are distributed to school districts. The coordinator said, "A district knows that if they appear on this list, they have homeless children and need to reserve some Title I funds for them."

To establish the Title I, Part A Set-asides Initiative, the buy-in of administrators at the state and local level was crucial. According to the coordinator, administrators had "to believe that homeless and mobile kids need a bigger break because of the amount of time in school they're going to miss." Getting them to this point involved awareness-

Title I Can Stretch McKinney-Vento Funds

Oregon received $253,000 in McKinney-Vento funds in 1999-2000. Eighteen districts received sub-grants. An additional 86 districts that did not receive McKinney-Vento funds set aside a portion of their Title I allocation for services to homeless children. According to the state coordinator, *"Oregon has essentially quadrupled our McKinney-Vento funds through our Title I, Part A Set-asides Initiative. Our $250,000 in McKinney-Vento funds is now supplemented at the LEA level with almost $1 million in Title I, Part A reserves for serving homeless students. That's been the case annually for four years now."*[4]

raising and convincing people that "the larger common denominators are poverty and mobility … homelessness is made up by many layers of disadvantage…."

How to Serve Homeless Students with Title I

Oregon districts submitting a consolidated ESEA Program Application[5] also receive a *Title IA – Homeless Set-asides Table* that provides the number of homeless children and youth, from birth through grade 12, who live within their boundaries. This table includes the name of the county and district, the name of the shelter provider, the daily average shelter count, the daily average district count, and the annual district estimate of the number of homeless children and youth. Accompanying instructions state that:

- The Oregon Housing and Community Services Department conducts shelter counts twice a year and ODE organizes them
- The table is to be used in conjunction with the Oregon Consolidated IASA Program application
- All districts listed on the table must reserve Title IA funds to address the needs of homeless students. For districts not listed on the table, the set-aside is optional.
- To estimate the amount of funds to reserve, a district's nightly average may be multiplied by the district's per-pupil allocation, although using this calculation method is not required
- Not all homeless children and youth are counted: campers, motel residents, doubled-up families, and others may not be included in the table, although they may be eligible for services. Districts are advised to assess local need and support measures to address those needs.
- Districts that are McKinney-Vento Homeless Program grantees should use current local data from that program to inform budget decisions

The Oregon state coordinator also encourages districts to support migrant recruiters and other home-school consultants who are typically funded by the Title I Migrant program through the Title I, Part A program. The coordinator reports that "district people realize that it makes good economic sense to get the most out of a person who is going to be in the field already … looking for families in trailer parks, motels, and campsites…." This way, she explained, when a recruiter locates children who are homeless but not migrant, they can receive needed services promptly and efficiently.

The Illinois state coordinator encourages districts to submit a consolidated ESEA state plan to ED and to include their homeless education program in the plan. He said, "Homeless children are a subset of Title I. They are some of the poorest and neediest, so it is logical to tie the services together to serve them...being part of the consolidated plan increases our reach to non-McKinney-Vento districts. Whereas the McKinney-Vento program on its own would reach 20 programs in Illinois, the consolidated plan

enables us to reach about 800 of our 900 districts statewide, since that is the number of districts that submit a consolidated plan."

Evaluate and Monitor with an Eye Toward Program Improvement

- **Collect high-quality data**
- **Use the data for program improvement**

State coordinators are required to gather information on homeless children and youth in their state and report findings to ED once every three years. In our sample of states, we uncovered promising strategies to:

- Collect high-quality data
- Use the data for program improvement

Collect High Quality Data

Data collected from school districts across a state may not be comparable, and therefore not useful to inform a statewide needs assessment or demonstrate whether a homeless education program was successful. In Texas, the coordinator launched a "uniform data reporting" effort to track homeless students, evaluate McKinney-Vento projects, and monitor the academic achievement of homeless students. The new data reporting requirements were gradually phased in so that they would not overwhelm districts with too many new requirements all at once.

Because 1997 was the first year of a new McKinney-Vento grant cycle, the coordinator saw this as a good opportunity to introduce her data collection plan at that year's annual meeting of McKinney-Vento subgrantees. When projects accepted their new grant, they also accepted the mandate to report uniform data. Project directors were instructed to purchase a computer and specific reporting software (using McKinney-Vento funds). They were also asked to add some data items to the information they were already collecting. Uniform reporting became mandatory in 1998. Every year since, the amount of data that projects have been mandated to report has increased.

Texas: Collecting Comparable Data Statewide

Since 1998-99, McKinney-Vento project directors throughout Texas have been required to report data on the extent to which services to homeless students through the McKinney-Vento program improved the capacity of those students to enroll in, attend, and succeed in school. Projects begin data collection on September 1; after that, at the beginning of each month they submit data on students who have exited the McKinney-Vento program during the previous month. The state homeless office enters the data for the student into a master database. All projects submit data electronically, either by e-mail or on a diskette.

Project directors receive specific instructions defining and explaining the data items to collect. Data requirements include background information as well as information on present living situation, participation in special programs (e.g., Title I, special education, Even Start, etc.), special programs to which the McKinney-Vento program will refer the student, academic services rendered through McKinney-Vento (e.g., after-school tutoring; holiday programs; in-class assistance; inter-session programs, etc.).

Use Data for Program Improvement

State coordinators with whom we spoke use data in many ways to improve their homeless education programs. For example, with high-quality data in hand, McKinney-Vento subgrantees in Texas answer three questions in a narrative report:

- In what ways is the program working to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness?
- In what ways is the program effective in meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness?
- What changes will the program make in the future to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness?

The Illinois state coordinator "shadows" local homeless liaisons for a day. He monitors subgrantees, learns about the issues they face, and identifies areas in need of improvement. "Evaluation takes a step further than monitoring to focus on program improvement -- identifying program successes, progress, and challenges," he said. "My shadowing isn't so much to monitor, though that is part of it. I really am trying to learn about what the liaisons do. What are the problems? What can be done about them? In the past I went for small amounts of time. However, just recently, I started spending the entire day with them. I do check that grantees are compliant with what they said they would do in their application, but I also go with them to visit homeless families and do their usual tasks.... I think going

into the field like this will help me understand how to collect data that shows that we are adequately serving the population. Numbers are not enough as they are."

And in Oregon, the state coordinator requires subgrantees to submit mid-year and end-of-year reports to evaluate their effectiveness. She submits these reports to ED and uses them to help subgrantees improve their programs.

Oregon: Districts Use Data for Program Improvement

In Oregon, subgrantees look at student outcomes to evaluate what they do well and what needs work. The state coordinator reviews the mid-year report and makes sure that each project plans to incorporate evaluative information in its end-of-year report. To assist district liaisons in setting up measurable objectives for their projects and in showing quantifiable progress, the state coordinator created a guide entitled *Impacts of McKinney-Vento Education Projects for Homeless Children and Youth*. Based on a set of activities authorized in the McKinney-Vento Act, this guide details how to measure the effect of student outreach and transportation assistance, among other things.

To measure the effect of student outreach, for example, liaisons could report:

- The number of homeless children and youth who previously did not attend school, but who now attend regularly
- The time needed to place homeless students in appropriate schools
- The number of enrollment delays for homeless students
- The number of school placements for highly mobile children who move within a district (i.e., indicating increased school stability)

Or to measure the effect of providing transportation assistance, liaisons could report change in:

- The percentage of homeless students attending school regularly through transportation assistance
- The number of days individual homeless students cannot attend school due to lack of transportation

[1] Anderson, L.M., Janger, M.I., & Panton, K.L.M. (1995). *An evaluation of state and local efforts to serve the educational needs of homeless children and youth* (page xi). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[2] Phillips, C.M., Wodatch, J.K., & Kelliher, C.T. (forthcoming). *Access and achievement: Reducing barriers for homeless children and youth. A Follow-up Study to the 1995 National Evaluation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program* (page v). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[3] Connecting Title I and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act: Providing services for homeless children and youth. (2000, May). *Title I Monitor*, (5)5, 14-17.

[4] *Title I Monitor*, 2000, May, 14-17.

[5] States may choose to submit consolidated state plans to the U.S. Department of Education for certain programs, including the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program. By submitting a consolidated plan, a state can obtain funds under many federal programs through a single consolidated plan, rather than through separate plans or applications.

Promising Practices from Other State-Level Players, Districts, and Schools

State coordinators work hard to address the pressing challenges confronting the education of homeless children and youth. But statewide coalitions, advocacy groups, state legislatures, districts, and schools offer promising practices as well.

Awareness Raising

- **Conduct a local needs assessment**
- **Target a wide audience**
- **Develop materials to distribute widely**

The McKinney-Vento Act: Awareness-Raising

States must develop and implement professional development programs that heighten school personnel's awareness of, and capacity to respond to, problems related to the education of homeless children and youth. School districts may use McKinney-Vento subgrant funds for:

- Professional development designed to deepen understanding and sensitivity of school personnel to the needs and statutory rights of homeless children and youth
- Education and training for parents of homeless children and youth about their children's rights and the resources available to them

Source: Title VII, SubTitle B, of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 11431 et. Seq.

In addition to the far-reaching efforts of state coordinators to raise awareness, many whom we interviewed described the importance of the district and school liaisons. They particularly noted efforts to:

- Conduct a local needs assessment
- Target a wide audience
- Develop materials to distribute widely

State Boards of Education Can Support Awareness Raising

The Illinois State Board of Education adopted a policy that recommends that districts provide professional development on the legal rights of homeless students, methods to identify students, and sensitivity to their needs and challenges.

Conduct a Local Needs Assessment

Just as assessing the need for statewide awareness-raising can lead to targeting the greatest needs, the same holds true for districts and schools. For instance, the homeless liaison in Santa Cruz County, California, administers a two-page survey to all principals in the district. It inquires about the school's homeless education services, summarizes federal and state homeless education law, and asks whether the principal would like to schedule professional development to raise awareness of homeless education issues among staff.

Target a Wide Audience

We uncovered awareness-raising activities aimed at many different audiences. Activities are geared to pre-service teachers and homeless service providers as well as other school staff and the general public For example, The Opening Doors program, funded by the Illinois Board of Education, provides:

- A 1-800 hotline for homeless issues. Opening Doors staff added an extension to a pre-existing hotline operated by the Board of Education. With McKinney-Vento funds, new hotline staff received training. If they cannot answer a particular question, they refer callers to someone who can. Posters in schools, at the Salvation Army, food banks, shelters, churches, and libraries have widely publicized the hotline.

- A website used by the state coordinator as well as by service providers, social workers, and school and district staff. The site provides information such as key provisions of state and federal homeless legislation, and "tip sheets" for teachers, principals, enrollment clerks or secretaries, nurses, and social workers. Topics include guidelines for identifying homeless children and youth and procedures for enrolling them in school. The state homeless coordinator also uses this website to post relevant ED services and information.

- The dissemination of press releases and public service announcements. This typically occurs when new statistics come out or during the first cold spell. The director of the Illinois Opening Doors program explained that "this is a big time for enrolling homeless kids since the parents want them out of the cold, or they go to a shelter and the shelter tells them they must enroll their child."

Use the Internet to Reach a Wide Audience

"The materials [for the website] are created under the assumption that people would rather get a little information more often than one big packet. People are too busy to read a bunch of stuff so we keep them to one page. Everything we send out has a name and number to call with questions. If nothing else, this is what we want people to know -- that there is a real person you can call and get an answer."

Coordinator
Illinois Opening Doors Program

The Illinois Opening Doors program is exploring a new awareness-raising model that trains pre-service teachers and social workers. While admitting that coordination with institutions of higher education will likely pose a challenge, the director remains dedicated to the concept, noting that "...new teachers should be prepared before they are already teaching, and [during their pre-service education] is an efficient time to do it...and new teachers are full of hope and are receptive to addressing [homeless education] problems."

Target a full range of staff positions and make attendance mandatory. Because homeless students need special attention and assistance in ways that will prevent them from being ostracized or stigmatized, it is important that staff at all levels participate in awareness-raising activities. Chicago Public Schools requires school-level training on homeless education, thus greatly strengthening federal and state policies on awareness-raising. At least annually, principals attend a homeless education training session on the procedures and forms related to district policy and state and federal law. The Chief of Schools and Regions conducts the two-hour session, using a PowerPoint presentation, a comprehensive program manual, posters for each school office, and pamphlets for distribution to parents.

To keep the training engaging and useful, the Chief revises the agenda and content every year. The homeless education program ensures that all principals have an opportunity to attend the training by providing frequent make-up training sessions. Principals are strongly encouraged to bring assistant principals, homeless education liaisons, and school clerks. Within 30 days of attending the session, principals must provide training to all staff within their schools, and with sign-in sheets, certify to the district coordinator that school staff received the training. The district also provides voluntary follow-up training focused on sensitivity to homelessness and collaboration with shelter staff.

In Baltimore County, the homeless education program worked with the districtwide Homeless Education Steering Committee on a comprehensive staff development plan for the education of homeless students. Program staff enlisted wide membership on the Steering Committee, including district staff developers, administrators, transportation staff, secretaries, nurses, and many others to ensure a high-

quality, relevant staff development plan. The plan is revised on an ongoing basis and targets staff development to those personnel who are likely to have the greatest impact on homeless students -- including all new teachers, pupil personnel workers, school counselors, school social workers, special education supervisors, administrators, school nurses, bus drivers and other transportation staff members, and Head Start staff members.

Additionally, the district Office of Staff Development helped the Steering Committee design training for school-based teams. The district superintendent invited all school principals to send a team (including an administrator, counselor, social worker, teacher, secretary, and parent) to the one-day training event, where participants developed a Homeless Education Action Plan. School secretaries, who were recognized as key gatekeepers in enrolling homeless students, received additional training; the superintendent encouraged attendance by authorizing professional development release time.

Sample Awareness Raising for Secretaries in Baltimore County

Awareness-raising training for all school secretaries in the Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) was developed by the Homeless Education Steering Committee, which included many secretaries. Their involvement was invaluable in creating training targeted to specific needs. The superintendent of schools granted professional development release time on a staggered schedule for secretaries at all 162 county schools. This training included:

- Welcome by the administrative secretary of the Title I and Child Care Offices
- Opening homeless awareness activity conducted by students from a local high school
- Overview of the McKinney-Vento Act by the Maryland State Homeless Education Coordinator and the BCPS Homeless Education Consultant
- Overview of BCPS policies and procedures to identify and enroll homeless students presented by the Director of the Office of Pupil Personnel
- Keynote address by homeless education staff from Project HOPE at the College of William and Mary (see description of Project HOPE on pg. B13)
- Panel discussion including staff from Title I and Child Care Offices, principal from a local elementary school, secretarial staff from the Title I and Child Care offices, and staff and parents from a Baltimore County homeless shelter
- Closing activities led by Homeless Education staff members

School secretaries receive followup materials regularly throughout the school year, and follow-up training as needed.

The school district in Santa Cruz, California, also holds annual training for principals, office staff, teachers, nurses, and bus drivers. The training's primary focus is on ensuring that staff at each school can identify and enroll homeless students in accordance with the law.

Develop Materials to Distribute Widely

Because not every district has a McKinney-Vento subgrant or a homeless program liaison, it is important that states distribute their awareness raising materials as widely as possible. Bucks County, Pennsylvania, develops materials and training for the entire state under contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Education. A representative summarized the intent by saying, "We design these materials generically so [that] other states can use them. All materials focus on the McKinney-Vento Act, so if you go to a workshop in any town in Pennsylvania, you would see consistency in terms of the message." Additionally, during every school term, Pennsylvania's Deputy Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education sends a letter to each superintendent and homeless liaison. The letters reemphasize local requirements regarding homeless students and cite *Pennsylvania Basic Education Circulars*, which include additional information on the rights of homeless children and youth.

The Illinois Opening Doors program produces a series of one-page tip sheets designed for different audiences throughout the community. The one for teachers describes signs of student homelessness. Principals receive a tip sheet on state-level homeless law and policy, while enrollment clerks, secretaries, social workers, and nurses receive information and strategies most relevant to their respective professions.

Develop a comprehensive district manual. The Chicago Public Schools developed a guide on homeless education in that district for Chicago educators and community members. The 66-page document addresses homeless policy and law, school-level requirements, standard district procedures and forms, and frequently asked questions. A task force including advocates from the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, members of the state and local school boards, Chicago city officials, shelter staff, and staff of the Chicago Homeless Education Program helped develop the manual.

A Comprehensive Reference Manual Can Raise Awareness throughout the Community

A comprehensive manual for a homeless education program might include the following topic areas and sample documents, as does the Chicago Public Schools manual:

- Mission statement regarding the education of homeless students
- A list of "What Schools Need to Do"
- District homeless education policies and procedures
- State and federal guidance, policies, and laws
- "Getting Your Child in School" poster
- Policy notice to be distributed to all district parents
- Samples and directions for filling out all relevant forms (provided in multiple languages):

  Student intake information
  Public transportation request
  Alternative transportation request
  Dispute resolution process

- District policy regarding waiver of school fees
- District policy regarding uniforms
- Frequently asked questions
- School district organization chart and contacts
- Local service providers and telephone numbers

Develop resource guides. States and districts can develop resource guides to make it easier and faster for school staff to locate services for homeless students. For example, Santa Cruz has compiled a booklet of local resources and contact information. The booklet outlines:

- Services the district homeless education program can provide
- Services available from other local agencies such as the Community Action Board

- Resources created by other organizations that focus on homeless education (e.g., *Strategies for Teachers with Homeless Students in Their Classrooms* (from the National Center for Homeless Education and the Illinois Opening Doors Program)

- A summary of findings for the Santa Cruz County Homeless 2000 Census and Needs Assessment

Keep parents informed. The Homeless Children's Initiative in Baltimore County provides homeless parents with information about their children's legal rights to immediate enrollment. The initiative provides a folder known as a Parent Pack, containing important information that homeless families can take with them. Information includes advice on what to do when moving, such as notifying the school of departure to begin records transfer, requesting a copy of all school and immunization records, and a reminder to keep all records in the folder pockets for easy access.

Design a Comprehensive Plan to Raise Awareness Community-wide

A comprehensive design might include:

1. A task force composed of educators, school board members, advocates, service providers, parents, and government officials to guide awareness-raising activities

2. Policy to encourage or require professional development

3. A comprehensive manual for community members and school and district staff that includes state and district law and policy; the rights of homeless children and youth; promising practices from other states and districts; a list of service providers

4. Posters, pamphlets, and other materials to distribute communitywide

5. Training for principals, teachers, secretaries, enrollment clerks, social workers, and other service providers, which encourages or requires participants to train their colleagues

Raise Awareness Among Parents

All Chicago parents receive a four-page notice that describes the homeless education program and the district policy on homeless education, including key definitions, enrollment and transportation rights, and the dispute resolution process. Parents are asked to sign and return the notices, which are printed in English, Spanish, and Polish. The district policy also requires that a "Getting Your Child in School" poster, which lists homeless children's rights and the name of the homeless liaison, be prominently displayed in every school.

Take advantage of newsletters, posters, pamphlets, and the local newspaper. Some of the more portable media can reach a wide audience simply by being short and easy to mail or to carry around. Some districts periodically develop and distribute newsletters. The school district in Fort Wayne regularly distributes its monthly newsletter to 225 people in the community, including school secretaries, teachers, and principals. The newsletter updates readers on homeless issues, recent articles and research, statistics, and service strategies. Many states and districts distribute posters and pamphlets. These media provide concise and to-the-point information, as well as contacts who can answer more in-depth questions or provide services. Chicago Public Schools distributes a poster designed for homeless parents that must be displayed in every school. The poster has been translated into Spanish, Polish, and Arabic. Similarly, the Pennsylvania homeless program distributes a "Homeless Children Have a Right to a Free, Appropriate Education" poster to every district in the state, so that staff can then make copies or request more.

Use Local Newspapers

Santa Cruz promotes awareness of its homeless education program by asking for donations to the homeless education program in the local newspaper. Not only does the ad solicit donations, but it tells homeless families and the community that homeless students have rights and a program to facilitate their education.

Pamphlets Answer Basic Questions Quickly

In Baltimore County, widely distributed pamphlets include:

- *FACTS About Education for Homeless Children and Youth*. This pamphlet, which is created by the Maryland State Department of Education and personalized for every district in the state, answers questions regarding the rights of parents and their children to a free public education, contains a brief excerpt from the McKinney-Vento Act stating the purpose of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, and gives information on whom to call with questions. Its distribution includes all Baltimore County homeless education liaisons, shelters, principals, and secretaries.

- *Homeless Education: Background and Programs*. This pamphlet contains facts about homelessness in Baltimore County and homeless programs in BCPS as well as homeless services available to Baltimore County Schools. It is distributed to every school in the BCPS system and service agencies located within the BCPS boundaries.

- *Information Sheet About Educating Homeless Students*. Updated each year, this sheet provides quick reference to information, including: The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness; BCPS procedures for homeless students, such as providing Title I services, a waiver of proof of residence, immunization, or other records; and priority placement in early childhood programs as well as contact/resource information.

Immediate Enrollment

- **Minimize enrollment barriers through policy**
- **Use a systematic process for records transfer and assign a staff member the responsibility to oversee this process.**

The McKinney-Vento Act: Immediate Enrollment

States and districts must develop or revise policies to remove school enrollment barriers facing homeless children and youth. States must:

- Address school enrollment problems, including delays caused by requirements for immunization records, residency records, guardianship records, birth certificates, and school records,
- Describe procedures (in the state plan) for the prompt resolution of disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youth, and
- Ensure that homeless children have equal access to the same public preschool programs, administered by the state, that are provided to other children; and that homeless students can participate in all federal, state, or local before- or after-school care programs for which they are eligible.

Districts must:

- Select which school a homeless child or youth will attend according to his or her best interest. This may mean keeping the student in the school of origin for the remainder of the academic year or (if the family becomes homeless between academic years) for the subsequent year. Districts may enroll the child or youth in any school that serves his or her attendance area, and must comply, to the extent feasible, with the request made by a parent or guardian regarding school selection, and
- Transfer a homeless student's records promptly between the former district and new district. This provision applies to any record ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs.

State coordinators cite homeless students' frequent movement from school to school as the leading barrier to their academic success.[1] The McKinney-Vento Act requires that states and districts minimize barriers to the immediate enrollment and placement of homeless students in schools. A survey of state homeless coordinators indicates that the enrollment of homeless students has speeded up significantly in the last five years.[2] Some of this progress is due to the fact that states have reduced many legislative barriers to enrollment, such as securing health, academic, residency, and guardianship records.[3]

Many states have made substantial progress toward removing barriers to immediate school enrollment by revising laws or policies to eliminate immunization-records barriers completely. Some of these states have developed systems to immunize students at school sites, coordinate with a local health agency, or verify immunization by telephone.[4] Other barriers remain, however, particularly when school staff and enrollment clerks are unaware of the legal rights of homeless students. Requirements for proof of guardianship persist as an obstacle to immediate enrollment; many schools require these records to protect themselves from liability and over-enrollment.[5]

Many districts, including those we visited, have developed or revised policies to ensure that homeless students can enroll in school right away, by, for example, allowing a 30-day grace period to provide records. One district in particular, the Baltimore County Public Schools, demonstrated its commitment to immediate enrollment by allocating some of its McKinney-Vento funds to assist families with the costs of tracking down records and participating in meetings for school enrollment and placement. To expedite the enrollment of homeless students, funds may be used to cover taxi fees and paperwork fees. Funds have also been used to enable homeless parents or guardians to participate in enrollment and placement meetings, such as meetings to develop an individualized education program (IEP) for students eligible for special education services. Members of the BCPS Homeless Education Steering Committee have accompanied some homeless families to hearings, including their due process hearings under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), to serve as advisors. Other promising ways to ensure the timley enrollment and placement of homeless children and youth include:

- A policy to clarify immediate enrollment and minimize enrollment barriers, and
- A systematic process for records transfer, with one person in charge.

Minimize Enrollment Barriers Through Policy

Limit school transfers. One way to avoid having to transfer records in the first place is to limit school transfers. The McKinney-Vento Act supports this by declaring that all homeless children have the right to attend their school of origin to minimize educational disruption. The Victoria Independent School District in Texas limits school transfers through their One Child, One School, One Year policy, which supports the homeless student's right to attend their school of origin.

Staff of the homeless education programs we visited note that local policies would not be effective if they weren't supported from the top down. Not only do district and school administrators need to be aware of the policies, but school liaisons need to remind school staff and homeless students themselves of students' rights.

Look to relevant state policy. The Bucks County Intermediate Unit in Pennsylvania looks to its state educational policy, entitled the Basic Education Circular, for guidance on school enrollment procedures. The Pennsylvania circular states that the educating district should begin to instruct students as soon as it receives proof of age and evidence of immunization, or evidence that an immunization program has been started. In the case of homeless students, however, the educating district should make special exceptions when it comes to waiting on records to enroll students, contacting the student's prior district to verify immunization by telephone if necessary. The circular cites the state's policy in affirming that oral confirmation between professionals provides sufficient basis for enrolling a student, with written confirmation to follow within 30 days. The circular also states that instruction should begin as soon as possible after the enrollment process begins.

Use a Systematic Process for Records Transfer and Put Someone in Charge

Seventy percent of state coordinators report difficulties in obtaining some or all of the necessary records of homeless children who transfer to their schools.[6] Although some states amended their laws regarding records transfer in response to the McKinney-Vento Act, many of the most effective solutions to the problem of records transfer have been designed by local districts.

Staff in several districts we visited say that channeling many of homeless students' needs through a single person ensures an efficient enrollment process. Homeless families will likely have difficulty keeping track of records, contacting previous schools to initiate transfers, and working around school bureaucracies. Many have found that when a liaison or other specified contact person leads a homeless student through the process -- going with the student from the shelter to the school and completing forms and requirements, such as a doctor's appointment if immunization records cannot be found -- the length of time it takes to access a student's records decreases significantly.

In Chicago, the homeless liaison/contact person in the student's new school must enroll the child, contact the previous school for records, and make any immediate referrals for medical documentation or immunizations. When the homeless liaison submits the appropriate forms and paperwork to the Homeless Education Program, the data go into a central computer system. About 75 percent of homeless students identified by Chicago schools are already in the district's data system, greatly simplifying records transfer. Because about 80 percent of the homeless students in the district transfer from other schools within the district, most documents can be easily tracked down by searching the district's database.

Each Baltimore County public school has a Pupil Personnel Worker. This individual verifies the homeless status of the student and transfers records. By immediately involving the Pupil Personnel

Worker, who is familiar with the law and local policy, the enrollment process is shortened considerably. Specifically, the Pupil Personnel Worker will:

- Coordinate with appropriate school personnel to obtain missing records,
- Facilitate the transfer process when a homeless student changes schools within the same district or between school districts,
- Deliver records to the receiving school, and
- Initiate a request for education records (for either transfer or withdrawal) through a telephone call with the student's school.

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[1] Phillips, C.M., Wodatch, J.K., & Kelliher, C.T. (forthcoming). *Access and achievement: Reducing barriers for homeless children and youth. A follow-up study to the 1995 National Evaluation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program* (page 13). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[2] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 13.

[3] Anderson, L.M., Janger, M.I., Panton, K.L.M. (1995*). An evaluation of state and local efforts to serve the educational needs of homeless children and youth* (page 12). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[4] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 10.

[5] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 10.

[6] Vissing, Y. (1998, November). *Homeless children: Addressing the challenge in rural schools* (EDO-RC-98-1). ERIC® Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

Transportation

- **Develop state law and policy to clarify the McKinney-Vento Act provisions**
- **Develop local transportation policy that facilitates the attendance of homeless students**
- **Collaborate with the district department of transportation to provide the most appropriate transportation to homeless students**
- **Develop a systematic process to meet the transportation needs of the children**

The McKinney-Vento Act: Transportation and School of Origin

States and school districts must review and revise any policies that impede enrolling homeless children and youth in school, including transportation barriers.

School districts must provide homeless children and youth with services comparable to those offered to other students, including transportation services.

McKinney-Vento funds may be used to supplement transportation costs for homeless children and youth.

A national survey of 2,000 homeless and impoverished families found that one-quarter of the parents had problems enrolling or keeping their children in school. About half of these parents cited transportation as a barrier.[1] Further, in 1998, 24 state coordinators named transportation as among the top three barriers to homeless students' school success.[2]

Specific transportation barriers can include:

- Parents and guardians not knowing how to voice their needs to the district

  They may not know their rights, or not know whom to call to arrange for transportation, or they may have more immediate survival concerns.

- Complicated and costly transportation if the school of origin is far from a student's temporary residence, or if a student requires transportation across district or state lines

- Lack of communication and coordination

  It is not a simple task to identify the transportation needs of homeless children and youth, communicate these needs to the right person, and resolve problems, given the hectic schedules of staff at both schools and shelters.

- Finding additional local financial and staff resources

  Often districts must pay for public transportation tokens, taxi fares, and expanded bus routes or driver time. Further, districts already struggling to fund basic transportation to schools find it exceptionally difficult to transport homeless students to before- and after-school activities.[3]

- Lack of a school transportation policy

  The McKinney-Vento Act leaves some districts confused.[4] Specifically, it does not *require* that homeless students be transported to their school of origin, nor does it affix responsibility in cases of inter-district transportation.

Nevertheless, many states and districts successfully address these problems. Promising strategies identified by the states and districts in our sample include:

- Developing state law and policy to clarify the gray areas of the McKinney-Vento Act
- Developing local transportation policy
- Collaborating with the local department of transportation
- Developing a systematic process to identify and meet needs

Develop State Law and Policy to Clarify the McKinney-Vento Act Provisions

The McKinney-Vento Act's guidance on all matters related to the transportation of homeless children and youth is not always clear. For example, the McKinney-Vento Act does not address: (1) exactly how long a homeless student may remain in the school of origin; (2) who is responsible for transporting homeless students across district lines, or (3) procedures for filing and resolving enrollment disputes. Furthermore, many district administrators may not be aware of the McKinney-Vento Act and its provisions at all.[5] State law and policy can not only increase awareness of transportation issues among school and shelter staff in non-McKinney-Vento districts but also clarify the gray areas of the McKinney-Vento Act.

In 1995, the Illinois legislature passed the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act (SB 881), which district staff describe as being more effective than the McKinney-Vento Act in providing explicit guidance. The Illinois law clarifies McKinney-Vento transportation provisions in three ways:

- It clearly gives parents and guardians the option of keeping their children in the school of origin for the rest of the school year. The McKinney-Vento Act gives this option "to the extent feasible." Additionally, parents who must move because of their homelessness have an option to convene a meeting with a teacher and principal representative to discuss what arrangement might be in the best interest of their child.
- Illinois law describes how districts should resolve disputes when homeless students cross district lines to attend their school of origin. If the parents or guardians decide to keep the student enrolled in a school of origin across district lines, the two districts involved must share the responsibility and costs, unless they decide otherwise.

- The law lays out a process for parents to dispute a school's or district's refusal to enroll homeless students. In these situations, the state law designates regional superintendents (or other appropriate individuals) as ombudspersons to facilitate dispute resolution. In the meantime, the student remains in the school of origin.

Although not in our sample, other states have made notable progress in this area. For example, Iowa's 1989 state homeless education policy was one of the first to define responsibility for inter-district transportation. It established that if a homeless student must cross district lines, the sending district assumes responsibility for transporting the student to a bus stop in the district of origin. In 1999, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted an article of the Annotated Code of Maryland (Title 13A.05.09) that requires districts to "confer to determine the feasibility of transportation options" when a student must travel across district lines to remain in the school of origin. It also elaborates on factors in determining which school will best serve the interests of the homeless student, requires districts to establish a grievance process, and provides parents with the power to appeal decisions all the way to the state board of education. In Pennsylvania, the Department of Education regularly disseminates Basic Education Circulars to provide districts and schools with guidance regarding transportation.

Develop Local Transportation Policy

The support of the local board of education and administration is critical in establishing and maintaining a successful transportation system for homeless students.[6] Without local scrutiny, state and federal laws and policies can be rendered meaningless until local practices are challenged in court. However, with local commitment, local policy can provide crucial monetary and human resources. In the sites we visited, local policies focus on the guarantee of transportation (1) for all homeless children and youth and (2) to the school of origin.

Guarantee transportation for all homeless children and youth. Chicago developed district policy to guarantee transportation for homeless students to the school of origin. The local policy not only reemphasizes the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act, but clarifies local intent and commitment. The Chicago Board of Education and district officials demonstrated their commitment to transporting homeless students to and from school by committing adequate funding. Although the district receives $350,000 in McKinney-Vento funds, the district spends approximately $500,000 on bus passes and $1,600,000 on school bus service for homeless students.

Chicago is exploring two new ideas to increase its efficiency and save money when transporting homeless students to and from school:

- Working with the city and Chicago Transit Authority to institute a reduced-fare pass for homeless students and their families
- Developing a database to track where and when students become homeless and where they temporarily reside. With this information, shelters can relocate where the need is greatest.

> *"It takes a great deal of coordination between [the student's school, the district homeless education program], and the transportation department to ensure that this is a successful system...however, most importantly, it takes a transportation department committed to seeing every child succeed."*
>
> Victoria Independent School District
> Homeless Ed Program Staff

Guarantee transportation to the school of origin. The Victoria Independent School District adopted a policy known as the "One Child, One School, One Year" policy, which means that homeless students need not change schools before the end of the current academic year. The district provides transportation to enable the student to remain at his/her school of origin.

Steps to Improve Transportation for Homeless Students

District directors of pupil transportation can take steps to support the transportation of homeless children and youth:

- Communicate regularly with the district homeless liaison
- Establish procedures to receive information about the transportation needs and pickup location of homeless students
- Know the rights of homeless students regarding transportation to school and to the school of origin
- Train bus drivers and dispatchers on the rights and needs of homeless students, as well as on the need for sensitivity and confidentiality
- Develop a bus routing system that can respond flexibly and quickly to new pickups
- Be aware of new shelter locations and prepare to include bus stops nearby
- Lobby for increased district commitment to provide homeless students transportation to school, as well as to before-and after-school programs.

Collaborate with the District Department of Transportation

Those whom we interviewed underscored the importance of working with the district's department of transportation to organize and sustain an effective way to transport homeless students to and from school. By making the department of transportation an active partner, the homeless education program can capitalize on the experience and knowledge of local transportation staff. Two specific suggestions for maximizing these contributions include dedicating adequate staff time and resources and using existing bus routes when possible.

Although not in our sample, districts in six rural counties around Vancouver, Washington, have found a creative way to work with the transportation office of their regional intermediate school district to improve transportation for homeless students. The Education Service District 112 provides transportation services to special education students in the region's 11 member districts. This service eventually developed into a transportation cooperative organized to serve homeless students as well. Now homeless students are transported to their schools of origin partly through special education bus routes, enabling districts to maximize their resources and serve remote areas. Success of the program relies on the coordination of the special education transportation staff and the regional homeless liaison.[7]

Develop a Systematic Process to Meet Transportation Needs

A systematic process -- with agreed-upon steps and individual roles -- can get homeless students to and from school efficiently and reliably. The districts we visited offered these suggestions:

- Identify one individual as the key contact regarding transportation
- Include a process to determine the best interests of the student regarding travel to a particular school
- Standardize transportation-related data collection and processing
- Plan for emergencies

Identify one individual as the key contact. District and school level liaisons -- or contacts -- are key to an effective transportation system for homeless students.[8] Easily identified when problems arise, they can explain legal rights and alternatives to parents, work with departments of transportation, and, in emergencies, even drive students to school. School liaisons can pinpoint homeless students' transportation needs and pass the information along to others quickly and efficiently.

In Fort Wayne, Indiana, when a school or shelter notifies the district liaison of a transportation issue, the liaison works with the departments of student services and transportation to make whatever arrangements are necessary. In this district, 95 percent of homeless students who receive district transportation take district busses, which transport many students outside of their attendance area as part of the district School Choice program. The liaison works with bus dispatchers to adjust pre-existing routes, sometimes within 24 hours. The liaison then notifies parents and shelter staff of the time, bus number, and pick-up point. When possible, the district follows its policy of picking up students at shelters first on the route and dropping them off last to minimize any stigmatization among their peers.

The Victoria, Texas, homeless program designates three district staff members to work closely with school-level parent liaisons and administrators. The parent liaison at each school assumes primary responsibility for coordinating all services, including transportation, for homeless children and youth. When the parent liaisons identify a homeless student and determine his/her transportation needs, he/she contacts a district liaison, who in turn notifies the district transportation department.

Develop a process for determining which school is in the student's best interest. Several districts have developed processes and related materials to help determine which school is in the student's best interest. Transportation needs are often a major consideration in that decision. Many times the decision requires a meeting of concerned parties. For instance, the Illinois law requires that if a parent wants a child to remain in the school of origin, "that parent or guardian, a teacher of the child, and the principal or his or her designee from the school of origin may meet at the option of the parent or the school to evaluate whether travel is in the [student's] best interest" (Section 1-15). Bucks County, Pennsylvania, has a "school selection checklist" for parents or guardians to use when deciding which school a child should attend. The list also asks parents to consider the length of stay in a school, possible means of transportation, mileage and transportation time, a school's ability to meet student needs, the family's final relocation plans, student safety, and whether or not a sibling attends the school.

Standardize data collection and processing. In Chicago, school liaisons complete a Transportation Request Form and a Homeless Education Program Information Form, and submit both to the district Homeless Education Program. District program staff then share this information with the Department of Transportation to make appropriate arrangements. The district typically processes requests for transportation within two to three days, staying well ahead of district policy, which states that transportation services for homeless students must be arranged within two weeks of the request.

In Baltimore County, a senior administrator from the school system's Transportation Division serves on the systemwide Homeless Education Steering Committee. As soon as a homeless student is identified, this administrator arranges transportation to the school of origin, or to the school selected as in the student's best interest, usually within twenty-four hours. If bus transportation cannot be provided

immediately, the Homeless Education Program may provide temporary taxi transportation so that the student can enroll immediately.

Deciding Which School Is in the Student's Best Interest: Some Considerations

Length Of Stay:	Long term? Short term?
Transportation possibilities:	Established bus route? Public transportation? Other methods?
Mileage to the original school:	Under or over 10 miles ? How many?
Geographical area in which the family plans to relocate:	To original school area? Near the shelter area? Other area?
Child's special needs:	Can those needs be met in the new school? Original school? Both schools?
Whether the student is close to a school break/or close to the end of the school year:	Would it be best to finish out the year? Make the break when there is a school break?
Use of public transportation:	Can the parent accompany the child? Does the shelter schedule permit it? Is the student old enough to travel alone?
Other school aged children:	Are there siblings that will be in the same school? Different schools?
Domestic violence issues:	Will the original school place the student in any danger? Is the shelter feeder school free from danger?
School requirement:	Does the new school require a uniform/dress code? Did the original school require the same type?
Notifying school about homeless situation:	Does the original school know the status of student? Does the original school agree that returning there is in the best interest of the student?
Parent school choice:	Original school? Feeder school?
Teen with a child:	Child care on school site: Original? Feeder school?

Source: Adapted from the school selection checklist used by the Bucks County Intermediate Unit, Pennsylvania

Plan for emergencies: When transportation cannot be arranged immediately, school liaisons or other staff in Chicago provide homeless students with emergency public transportation passes. In fact, the district provides every school in the district with a CTA Emergency Pack that includes student-rate public transportation passes, $6 in cash, and an adult 7-day pass. The adult pass makes it possible for a parent to accompany an elementary-age student. Similarly, in rare and temporary situations where district buses cannot transport homeless students, the Fort Wayne, Indiana, school district uses public transportation or special education busses to transport homeless students to school.

Develop a Systematic Process to Transport Homeless Students

Sites we visited suggested taking the following steps to ensure that homeless students can get to school:

1. A shelter, school, or district staff member identifies the homeless student and informs the family of their rights regarding transportation to school
2. The staff member completes an intake form that notes the family's temporary residence and helps them decide what school would be in the student's best interest
3. The staff member immediately informs the district homeless education liaison (or other district staff who are assigned this responsibility)
4. If necessary, the district homeless education liaison discusses options with the family, addresses disputes, or informs and answers questions from the school
5. The district homeless education liaison contacts and coordinates with the district department of transportation to arrange transportation for the student
6. The district homeless education liaison contacts the family with transportation information
7. If transportation cannot be immediately arranged, provide temporary transportation, such as taxi fare

In-school and Related Services

- **Accurately identify the need for programs and services by identifying homeless children and youth**
- **Ensure access through policy**
- **Create networks and partnerships to stretch resources**

The McKinney-Vento Act: In-school and Related Services

Each homeless child or youth must be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school, including services provided by:

- Title I of the ESEA or similar state or local programs
- Programs for children with disabilities S
- Students with limited English proficiency
- Vocational education
- Gifted and talented programs
- School meals programs
- Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs
- Referrals to health care services, including dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services (e.g., violence prevention counseling)

Source: Title VII, SubTitle B, of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 11431 et. Seq.

The McKinney-Vento Act requires states and districts to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to appropriate educational services and that they have opportunities to meet the same challenging state content and student performance standards to which all children are held. In addition to specific publicly funded education programs (e.g., Title I, gifted and talented programs), homeless children and youth need school supplies and access to services such as before- and after-school programs and health and social services that enhance their chances for school success.

However, many homeless students experience difficulty in gaining access to educational services. For example, the *Report to Congress Fiscal Year 2000* on the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program indicates that roughly a quarter (24 percent) of states report that homeless students have difficulty accessing Title I services.[1] Homeless children also have difficulty gaining access to gifted and talented programs, special education services, and Head Start or other publicly funded preschool programs.[2] In fact, the low numbers of enrolled preschool age homeless children suggest that this age group is greatly underserved.[3] In addition, school and district staff in non-McKinney-Vento districts often do not ensure that homeless students have access to these programs because they are unfamiliar with the requirements of the law.[4]

Other barriers include:

- Limited resources for identifying needs and for providing services. Most time and energy goes into identifying and enrolling homeless children and youth; the nature and quality of the services these students receive once they have arrived at school, if considered at all, may be viewed as a secondary issue[5]

- Programs that fill up to capacity. Programs whose limited enrollment slots fill up at the beginning of the school year cannot admit homeless children and youth who arrive at school later in the year.[6]

As noted, state coordinators in our sample have made great strides in ensuring homeless children's access to special education and Title I services. Most staff in the districts we visited described strategies to provide in-school services such as tutoring, enrichment, or homework help, or to provide school supplies and health and social services. To overcome some of the many barriers noted above, districts can:

- Accurately identify the need for programs and services by identifying homeless children and youth

- Develop policy aimed at ensuring access

- Create networks of service providers and partnerships among local businesses/organizations to stretch resources

Accurately Identify the Need for Programs and Services

A smart first step in providing in-school services to homeless students is to determine the extent of the need for particular services. As noted earlier, the district and/or school homeless liaison/contact, because he/she can serve as a point person for contacting shelters, community agencies, and school staff, can play a key role here. The liaison can identify which homeless students need school supplies or who needs in-school and related health and social services, and then follow through with other staff to ensure that the needs are met. In Bucks County, Pennsylvania, for example, shelter staff collect and regularly update information for a centralized database. The database contains a student's attendance record, need for counseling, weakest school subject, the Individualized Education Program for special education (where appropriate), and health-related needs (e.g., eye exam, hearing evaluation). Liaisons can refer to the database to speedily determine which educational and related services homeless students need.

Conduct a school survey. Another way to assess the need for in-school and related services is to conduct a school survey. The director of the homeless education program in the Santa Cruz County Office of Education surveys school principals annually to find out how many homeless students are in their schools and targets those schools that need immediate or extensive help in providing in-school and

related services to their homeless student populations. Survey items determine the top five priority needs for serving homeless students (e.g., counseling, tutoring, enrichment, school supplies). They also ask about any resources the school receives that might contribute to educational programming and enrichment activities for homeless children and youth, such as the Title I Part A Set-aside, which provides educational services to homeless students, or publicly funded community child care programs.

The Liaison: A Critical Link to In-school and Related Services

The community in Victoria, Texas, credits the success of its homeless education program to the placement of a parent liaison on every elementary and middle school campus, as well as on one high school campus. These liaisons are certified teachers who provide a link between the home and school. To identify homeless students and help them to succeed in school, liaisons:

- Monitor student attendance and conduct home visits if there is a problem
- Initiate interventions (e.g., tutoring or homework help) for students with academic problems
- Coordinate referrals to community health and social services

Ensure Access Through Policy

If publicly funded preschool or other such programs fill to capacity, a district cannot guarantee access for homeless students. To address this problem, the homeless program in Baltimore County Public Schools distributes an information sheet to all schools making it clear that the district's policy is that homeless children are eligible for early childhood programs and that, under certain circumstances, they may be placed in those programs, even if those programs are already filled to capacity. Readers are directed to call the homeless education office for more specific guidance and information.

Create Networks and Partnerships to Stretch Resources

Develop a network of service providers. Providing the many services that homeless students need to succeed in school is costly in terms of both financial and human resources. One way to offer a range of in-school and related services is to develop a network of service providers, a strategy used in several of the districts we visited. Creating such a network took an estimated three years in Santa Cruz, California, where the director of the homeless education program worked with school staff and local health and social service providers to create the Homeless Action Network. The first thing she had to do was convince the various service providers that there were homeless students in the area who needed their help. To do this, the director presented data from the survey of school principals (see above). To keep the network active, the homeless program director regularly attends monthly staff meetings of the

various service providers and encourages local newspapers to run stories on the benefits of these services to homeless students. After developing the network, the director worked with individual schools to identify a contact person who could assume responsibility for coordinating these services for individual students.

Develop local partnerships. The Santa Cruz homeless program also works with a local university to help homeless students achieve to high academic standards. Work-study students from the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) tutor homeless students, concentrating on building literacy and math skills. To prevent any stigma associated with homelessness, students do not know that the tutors specifically target homeless children and youth.

A Partnership to Build Literacy and Math Skills

The Santa Cruz Homeless Education Program provides one-on-one in-class tutoring to help homeless students build literacy and math skills. The tutoring program uses work study students from the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), who assist homeless students during the school day. Pulling students out of the regular classroom was not only disruptive, but also served to stigmatize the students as having problems. According to the homeless outreach program director, avoiding the stigma of being homeless is essential to the program's success.

Local Community Members, Service Providers, and Organizations Partner to Develop a Preschool Program

When a preschool program for children at a transitional housing center was introduced in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, local advocates for the homeless soon realized that children living in other area shelters did not have equal access to the program. A task force was formed to locate classroom space, which the local YWCA readily provided. All five shelters and the residential treatment program in Lancaster now make regular referrals to the two preschool locations.

The school district funds the preschool teacher's salary (she works at both preschool locations) and some of the supplies, while the rest of the supplies are provided by shelters and other service providers, such as The Community Hospital Auxiliary and the Junior League of Lancaster County. In addition to the preschool teacher, many community members volunteer through the Junior League and local colleges to help in the classroom -- and all are recruited and screened by the homeless educational liaison. Because the two preschool locations are located near the shelters they serve, transportation is not a problem for parents who bring their children. For this reason, preschool programs located on site at shelters are a good idea. However, transportation problems may arise once families leave the shelter. In Lancaster, because community members make special arrangements for homeless families as often as possible, many children continue in the preschool program from motels or other temporary locations after they leave a shelter.

Under the guidance of the school community liaison, tutors work closely with classroom teachers to address individual student needs. They also help homeless students enroll in after-school extended

learning programs, homework assistance programs, enrichment programs and other services as needed. In addition, tutors escort students to the UCSC campus for special events. Both the university and the district contribute to paying tutors' salaries -- the university pays 60 percent and the district pays 40 percent.

In Victoria, Texas, the district offers tutoring for homeless students after school through eight neighborhood-based homework centers. Collaborative funding by the Victoria homeless education program (KIDZConnection,) the Victoria Youth Home, the Victoria Housing Authority, Mid-Coast Family Services, the YMCA, the University of Houston-Victoria, the Boys and Girls Club, and district federal programs sustains the There's a Teacher in Your Neighborhood program. Qualified teachers and assistants staff the centers, where free snacks and small computer labs are available. This year, two additional homework centers were located on the two high school campuses to serve all students, including homeless students, four afternoons a week.

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[1] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2000). *Report to Congress: Fiscal Year 2000* (Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program [Title VII, Subtitle B of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act]) (page 7). Washington, DC: Author.

[2] Phillips, C.M.,Wodatch, J.K., & Kelliher, C.T. (forthcoming). *Access and achievement: Reducing barriers for homeless children and youth. A follow-up study to the 1995 National Evaluation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[3] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Report to Congress: Fiscal Year 2000*, 8.

[4] Phillips et al., forthcoming, 34.

[5] Anderson, L.M., Janger, M.I., & Panton, K.L.M. (1995*). An evaluation of state and local efforts to serve the educational needs of homeless children and youth* (page xi). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[6] Anderson et al., 1995, 63.

Outreach To Youth

- **Collaborate with local youth-serving organizations/programs**
- **Form a multi-disciplinary team**

The McKinney-Vento Act: Outreach to Youth

The State Plan (developed and implemented by the state coordinator) must describe programs for school personnel (including principals, attendance officers, teachers, and enrollment personnel) to heighten their awareness of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth.

Serving homeless youth (i.e., those youth between 12 and 18 years of age) is difficult on a basic level because simply *identifying* members of this highly mobile group is problematic. In addition to the challenge of identifying members of this hidden population, homeless youth face extreme barriers to school access. For example, curfew laws can make these youth guilty of a crime simply because they have nowhere to go, and schools in some states refuse to admit homeless teens due to liability concerns (if they do not live with a parent or legal guardian).[1] In addition, some school personnel may be reluctant to enroll homeless youth because they assume school safety or discipline problems will develop.

The problems of attendance and accruing the credits necessary to graduate from high school continue to be barriers to school success for these students. For instance, state or district attendance policies often specify a minimum number of days that a student must attend school to stay enrolled, to be promoted to the next grade, and to earn a diploma.[2] For these reasons and more, states and districts look for new ways to specifically address the problems that homeless youth face, although many acknowledge that this is an area where far more work is needed.

As noted earlier, the admissions manual developed by the Oregon state coordinator provides guidance to identify homeless youth and to alleviate some of the reluctance of schools to enroll homeless youth. And in Texas, district and school personnel can consult state law (Chapter 25, section 25.001(d)) of the Texas Education Code) when making decisions about the enrollment and admission of children and youth living away from parents or legal guardians, which is more likely the case for homeless youth rather than for younger children. At the district level, staff with whom we spoke suggested: (1) collaborating and coordinating with local youth-serving organizations and agencies, and (2) forming a multi-disciplinary team to provide homeless youth with the supports they need to re-engage in school or to get a job.

Collaborate with Local Youth-Serving Organizations/Programs

Establishing and maintaining contact with local youth-serving organizations and programs can increase the chances of identifying and enrolling homeless youth in school. In Victoria, Texas, the McKinney-Vento program staff includes a teacher liaison for the Students Taking Action and Responsibility (STAR) program, a Victoria ISD teen parenting program. The STAR teacher liaison identifies and enrolls pregnant and parenting teens who lack permanent housing, provides parenting classes, and helps to arrange transportation for any teen parent enrolled in the STAR program (and his/her child) to attend the school of origin. In addition, the STAR-sponsored day care centers are located on high school campuses. If a student does not have transportation to the STAR program office to join the STAR program, the STAR teacher liaison or other staff may visit the student at the school, or where the student is staying, and provide a travel voucher for use on the public transportation system.

In Santa Cruz, the homeless coordinator works closely with a drop-in educational center called The Bridge. Homeless and runaway youth can stop in between the hours of 11:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The Bridge provides them with lunch (with food donated by the community), befriends them, and encourages them to re-engage in school or work. Bridge staff provide services that include designing an independent study program, as well as medical and counseling services. A medical doctor stops by regularly to provide physical exams, and conduct workshops on topics such as hygiene, taking care of wounds, avoiding sexually transmitted disease, and birth control.

Some Oregon districts pool their McKinney-Vento and Title I, Part A dollars, and, for example, subcontract the position of homeless liaison to a local non-profit youth services agency. Because that individual is employed by the youth services agency, the liaison has increased knowledge of and access to other community youth-serving organizations that can help locate homeless children and youth as well as provide them with the community supports (e.g., health care, counseling) that they may need.

Form a Multi-disciplinary Team

The Santa Cruz homeless education coordinator helped to form a multidisciplinary team to address the multiple needs of homeless youth. The team consisted of the Santa Cruz Police Department Juvenile Officer, the downtown narcotics officer, a Child Protective Services social worker, the mental health homeless outreach worker, the Youth Services Homeless outreach worker, the director of the homeless resource center, and staff from the Santa Cruz AIDS Project and needle exchange program. Taking advantage of a California Child Welfare and Institution Code allowing agencies to share confidential information, everyone on the team signed an oath of confidentiality. According to the homeless liaison, "this was an extremely helpful approach to putting together the pieces of information

regarding a homeless street youth. Each agency [may have a different] piece of the puzzle, and together we [can] develop a plan of strategies and interventions to assist the referred youth."

Districts without a shelter or other services for youth can pull together a multi-disciplinary team that includes:

- Local law enforcement - particularly the juvenile officer from areas where youth congregate
- Mental health worker
- Child protective service worker
- A high school counselor
- Homeless liaison
- Representatives of local youth serving organizations (e.g., the YMCA)

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[1] Anderson, L.M., Janger, M.I., & Panton, K.L.M. (1995*). An evaluation of state and local efforts to serve the educational needs of homeless children and youth* (page 70). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

[2] Phillips, C.M.,Wodatch, J.K., & Kelliher, C.T. (forthcoming). *Access and achievement: Reducing barriers for homeless children and youth. A follow-up study to the 1995 National Evaluation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program* (page 12). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Conclusions: Some Cross-Cutting Strategies

- **Law and policy can strengthen and reinforce the McKinney-Vento Act**
- **Every school district needs a homeless liaison**
- **Collaborations and partnerships maximize district resources**
- **Create a comprehensive and coordinated homeless education program**

Visits to our three states and six districts uncovered many promising practices for helping homeless children and youth enroll and succeed in school. In addition to the strategies that address specific problem areas, such as transportation or awareness-raising, for example, we uncovered some strategies that hold promise for meeting challenges across a range of issues that homeless children and youth confront every day. These are:

- Enact law and policy to remove barriers to the successful education of homeless children and youth
- Ensure that districts appoint a homeless liaison/contact
- Collaborate and create partnerships to maximize the resources available to serve homeless children and youth

> *"The legislation is my Bible. It provides the backing and gives my efforts direction. It is simple and clear, and is only five pages long. It is easy to refer to and to understand. The legislation is particularly useful in [clarifying] school of origin [issues]. Often, I act as an intermediary with the law."*
>
> State Coordinator
> Illinois Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program
>
> *"The law is everything for us. We refer to both the McKinney-Vento and Illinois laws. The Illinois law clarifies the gray areas in McKinney-Vento and broadens [its reach] to include all districts/schools, not just the funded ones."*
>
> Coordinator
> Illinois Opening Doors Program

Law and Policy Can Strengthen and Reinforce the McKinney-Vento Act

The McKinney-Vento Act requires that states review and revise attendance laws and "other laws, regulations, practices or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment or success in school of homeless children and homeless youth" (McKinney-Vento Act, Section 721). The vast majority of states comply with this requirement by changing their laws or by creating special statutes for homeless children and youth.[12] The states we visited have enacted new legislation and/or adopted new policy either to clarify definitions in the McKinney-Vento Act or to strengthen the Act -- even extending its reach to more homeless students (e.g., through using the Title I, Part A Set-aside to serve homeless children and youth).

Keys to Enacting a State Law for Homeless Children and Youth

Work with advocacy groups to determine needs:

"*The first step was to contact, via letter and telephone, shelters statewide and local McKinney-Vento project directors to get their take on what a state law should include. The largest network of emergency shelters in Illinois is the PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) -- faith-based volunteers run these shelters...we contacted the local PADS shelters and shared our concerns and plans with them. We ended up with a list of 13 items on the wish list. You need to be able to exert muscle -- say, 'Look, there are 2000 shelters that want this to happen, and we have the data to prove it -- get yourselves on the legislators' radar screen.'*"

Give a name and a face to the law:

"*We got a photo journalist to take some pictures of homeless children -- so that we could put a face on the legislation. The chosen photo was of 'Charlie' -- holding his cat, no shoes, belly out. We asked his mom if we could use the photo. The legislation became known as Charlie's Bill. Then every letter we sent out -- all communications with sponsors, shelters, etc., had this logo -- Charlie's Bill -- with the picture. This was the best thing we did -- to give the legislation a name and a face.*"

Lobby with persistence and fearlessness to get bipartisan support:

"*We developed a list of those we would need to sponsor the bill -- both Republicans and Democrats.... The Executive Director (of the Coalition) spent every week of the spring legislative session in Springfield -- lobbying, explaining, getting support ... asking others, 'Who needs to get on board here?' The answer was many, including the entire education committee. So we brought in moms and homeless people and shelter folks from all over the state, especially to make the point that this is not just a suburban or inner-city issue -- it affects the entire state.*"

Program Coordinator, Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness

Districts can also adopt policy to reinforce and strengthen the McKinney-Vento Act. Chicago Public Schools, for example, recently published *Chicago Public Schools Homeless Education Program Policy and Other Important Documents: 2000-2001*. The Chicago Board of Education adopted the policy to reiterate the significant provisions of the state homeless education program, to affirm the board's commitment, and to implement guidelines for resolving issues affecting the education of homeless children and youth. The policy provides guidance on identifying, enrolling, and transporting homeless children and youth. Some ways in which Chicago's policy strengthens the state and federal laws include: (1) requiring annual in-service training for all school principals, who must then train other school staff, and (2) targeting specific Chicago community organizations and agencies for collaborative relationships.

Every School District Needs a Homeless Liaison

While only about 4 percent of school districts receive McKinney-Vento grants, homelessness is everywhere. Each district that receives a McKinney-Vento subgrant must designate a homeless liaison. The liaison works to identify homeless students, enroll them in school, and arrange transportation for them to get to the school. The liaison also makes referrals to health care and other services as appropriate while coordinating the activities of local service providers. Liaisons work hard to raise public awareness about homelessness. Our interviews with people at the state and district levels indicated the grave need for a homeless liaison, or "point person" in *every* district. Whatever the particular challenge at hand, homeless program staff emphasize the vital role of the homeless liaison as the critical link between homeless children and youth and the services to which they are entitled.

The Illinois state coordinator for homeless education recently initiated a process to identify a contact person for issues related to homelessness in all 900 Illinois school districts. Such a strategy was suggested at a conference sponsored by the National Center for Homeless Education. As a result, upwards of 750 or more Illinois school districts (out of 900) now have a contact person for issues related to homelessness.

Every District Needs a Homeless Liaison

"It just takes someone committing to doing it. There aren't any secrets. So my office sent a form to every district, as it usually does, asking for the number of homeless students in the district. This time we included a contact request at the bottom, and said that the superintendent will receive the information if a contact name isn't given.... Now we have a statewide directory of contacts. Kathy Conrad at the Opening Doors program uses the directory for their mailings. I also use it if I need to talk with a district about a student. In the future, I hope to improve the process.... By that I mean having contacts who invest more into addressing homeless issues -- someone with an advocacy bent and more time to commit to it."

State Coordinator
Illinois Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

Collaborations and Partnerships Maximize District Resources

The McKinney-Vento Act requires school districts to collaborate and coordinate. Specifically, they must:

- Coordinate with local social services agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless children or youth and their families

- Where applicable, coordinate with state and local housing agencies responsible for developing the comprehensive housing affordability strategy described in section 105 of the Cranston-Gonzales national Affordable Housing Act to minimize educational disruption for children who become homeless

Collaborate to maximize resources. In our sample, we found many examples of districts that collaborate and partner with each other, or with local agencies and organizations to identify and provide services to homeless children and youth. Coordination can be especially important at the local level, not only to avoid the duplication of services that might otherwise occur, but also to maximize the resources directly available to those in need. One collaborative relationship crucial in identifying homeless children and youth is between school district staff and/or the school homeless liaison and staff from local shelters.

Ways for Districts to Collaborate and Coordinate

- Share or pool resources, such as consultants and specialists
- Arrange for courtesy enrollments, tuition exchanges, and transportation agreements for students in neighboring districts to assist with placing homeless students
- Co-author grant applications for shared resources such as regional summer schools, area recruiters and liaisons, multi-district career fairs, or staff development presentations

Oregon State Coordinator

Partner to maximize resources. Inter-district partnerships also provide creative venues to serve homeless children and youth. In Texas, a partnership linking four school districts reportedly maximizes the efficient use of McKinney-Vento funds. Two of these districts, the Plano and Greenville Independent School Districts (ISDs), act together as the fiscal agent for the partnership. The other two partners are the McKinney-Vento and Sherman ISDs. Plano and Greenville subcontract the combined grants from the state to the University of Texas at Dallas to manage the homeless program for all four districts. This arrangement provides cost-efficiency, realizing economy of scale with regard to technical assistance and staff training in the four districts. In addition, the combined resources of the four districts and their manager have resulted in one substantial and creative learning opportunity for some homeless students; the university operates a Kid's College for students living in shelters. Kid's College students stay on the campus for a week and learn about a particular topic (e.g., cultures from around the world) through hands-on and interactive activities.

Create a Comprehensive and Coordinated Homeless Education Program

Homeless students will be best served when promising practices are implemented as part of a comprehensive and coordinated homeless education program. Promising practices that are implemented in isolation are likely to result in some homeless students falling between the cracks. A homeless education program should align and integrate the efforts of all stakeholders, and do so in a systemic, planned, and sustainable way. A key strategy to ensure that a homeless education program maintains coordination is to create a homeless education steering committee, consisting of representation from district offices (e.g., Title I, transportation, curriculum, homeless education), schools (e.g., teachers, nurses, secretaries, social workers, special educators, food and nutrition staff members), students, parents, government agencies, and homeless service providers. Such a committee should create a homeless education plan that organizes and directs district and community activities. Furthermore, the committee should meet regularly to assess the plan's implementation. The ultimate success of any homeless education program requires that the efforts of many individuals are coordinated and measured by whether all homeless students are identified, enrolled, and educated appropriately.

Create a Comprehensive and Coordinated Homeless Education Program

1. Enlist key school and community leaders to participate in a homeless education steering committee
2. Conduct ongoing awareness raising activities throughout schools and the community
3. Train and designate homeless education liaisons at each school to serve students and educate staff
4. Provide ongoing staff development
5. Collaborate continuously with homeless service providers and other civic groups

Coordinator
Baltimore County Homeless Education Program

* * * *

This guide has described promising practices that state coordinators for homeless education and other state, district, and school staff can use to meet the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, as well as some of the most pressing challenges to enrolling homeless children and youth in school and providing them with the supports they need to reach the same high standards as others. Although success in meeting these challenges rarely comes easily, when it does come, it is well worth the effort in improving the lives of these vulnerable children, youth, and families.

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[1] Phillips, C.M., Wodatch, J.K., & Kelliher, C.T. (forthcoming). *Access and achievement: Reducing barriers for homeless children and youth. A follow-up study to the 1995 National Evaluation of*

the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (page 6). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Appendix A

Promising Practices Highlights: State Participants

Promising Practices Highlights: State Participants

State Contact Information	Program Description and Promising Practice Highlights
Illinois Gary Dickirson State Coordinator Illinois Homeless Education Program Illinois State Board of Education 100 North 1st Street Springfield, Illinois 62777 (217) 782-3370 (217) 782-9224 fax gdickirs@smtp.isbe.state.il.us Kathy Conrad Coordinator Opening Doors Project Adult Learning Resource Center 1855 Mount Prospect Road Des Plaines, Illinois 60018 (847) 803-3535 (847) 803-3231 fax kconrad@irc-desplaines.org The Opening Doors web site can be found at: http://www.lth3.k12.il.us/openingdoors	• Opening Doors is an Illinois McKinney-Vento subgrant project with the primary mission of **raising awareness** statewide. Its web site is easy to use and provides access to many on-line resources • Exploring **awareness raising** possibilities for pre-service teachers and social workers through collaboration with higher education and preparation program standards boards • Aggressive state law, known as the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act (SB 881), enacted in 1995 that includes provisions mandating **immediate enrollment** of homeless children and strengthening the McKinney-Vento Act. • **District contacts/liaisons** for homeless education in every district • State law (Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act) strengthens **transportation** and **school of origin** issues by giving homeless parents a stronger voice in choosing schools, clarifies responsibility in interdistrict transportation situations, and establishes a clear dispute resolution process. • Statewide survey to assesses **awareness** of homeless issues and needs. • Broad net for **awareness raising** -- includes "1-800" hotline number; web site; press releases; public service announcements; "tip sheets" designed for various individuals that serve homeless students (such as teachers, nurses, secretaries and enrollment clerks, principals, and social workers) • State board of education policy encourages school districts to conduct **awareness raising** activities for districts and schools.

State Contact Information	Program Description and Promising Practice Highlights
Oregon Dona Horine Bolt State Coordinator Homeless Education Program Oregon Department of Education 255 Capitol Street NE Salem, Oregon 97310 (503) 378-3606 x600 (503) 373-7968 fax dona.bolt@state.or.us	• Oregon Student Admission Manual addresses **immediate enrollment** of homeless students, and provides guidance on identifying and enrolling **homeless youth**. • Innovative use of state **Title I, Part A "set-aside" funds** enables districts, especially those that do not receive McKinney-Vento funds, to provide Title I services to homeless students, and to serve more homeless students. • Some districts designate a homeless liaison from a youth services agency, which heightens the identification of, outreach to, and services for **homeless youth**. • Training document addresses how to collaborate with partners locally and at the statewide level.
Texas Barbara James State Coordinator Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth The Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin 2901 North IH-35 Austin, Texas 78722 (512) 475-8765 (800) 446-3142 toll-free in Texas (512) 232-1853 fax babawawa@mail.utexas.edu The Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth web site can be found at: http://www.tenet.edu/OEHCY/	• Training manual on homeless education issues and services for use by districts, schools, and service providers in **raising awareness**. • **Statewide uniform data reporting** to monitor McKinney-Vento subgrantee activities and needs, as well as to track trends in the achievement and demographics of homeless students. Includes standard form, computer software, and training. • Homeless students in Austin receive additional **in-school and related services** related to technology through the Support for Homeless Education: Linking Technoogy Resources to Shelters (SHELTRS) project (http://www.tenet.edu/shelters/. • *Questions and Answers Guide on the Eduation of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations* includes a section on **special education** in relation to homeless students. • 1-800 Hotline provides speedy resolution of enrollment disputes.

Promising Practices Highlights: District Participants

District Contact Information	Program Description and Promising Practice Highlights
Baltimore County Public Schools, Maryland Jill Moss-Greenberg Homeless Education Consultant Baltimore County Public School District 6901 Charles Street Baltimore, MD 21204 (410) 887-3763 (410) 887-2060 fax	• Formation of **Homeless Education Steering Committee**, with representatives from all key school system divisions, to assure systemic, coordinated identification and support for homeless students. • **Comprehensive staff development program** that includes awareness raising training for **school teams and school secretaries**. Program was co-developed by the Homeless Education Steering Committee, the BCPS Office of Staff Development, and the Baltimore County Coalition for the Homeless. • **Immediate enrollment** facilitated through each school's Pupil Personnel Worker who helps parents obtain necessary student records. Necessary costs may be covered by McKinney-Vento or Title I funds. • All schools have a Homeless Education Liaison who assists in identifying homeless students, obtaining resources to meet their needs, and informing staff at the school about regulations, effective strategies, materials and activities related to homelessness and educating homeless students. • Criteria and checklist for determining if the **school of origin** is in the student's best interest. • District takes special steps to ensure that homeless children participate in **early childhood education special education, gifted and talented, and service learning** programs. • **Parents Rights Brochure,** "KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: Facts About Education for Homeless Children & Youth" developed by Maryland State Department of Education in collaboration with local school districts. • Homelessness and information about educating homeless students is included in the **Multicultural Education Inservice Course** that is required for all teachers.

District Contact Information	Program Description and Promising Practice Highlights
Bucks County Intermediate Unit, Pennsylvania Tom Norlen Educational Liaison Bucks County Intermediate Unit # 22 705 N. Shady Retreat Rd. Doylestown, PA 18901-2507 (800) 770-4822 x1361 (215) 340-1964 fax	• Bucks County IU is contracted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education program to develop **awareness raising** materials and facilitate awareness raising activities for the entire state. • A workshop and accompanying materials entitled "How Do I Do That?" that presents concrete strategies and programs for serving homeless students. • Documents on designing a successful state or local homeless initiative. • "Parent Pack" folder **raises parental awareness** of their legal rights and what they should do if they move again in order to facilitate **immediate enrollment.** • **Resource guide** of all Pennsylvania shelters, as well as a directory of local resources. • Criteria and checklist for determining if the **school of origin** is in the student's best interest. • **Database** of homeless student information. • The BCIU has developed a countywide homeless committee of key school, shelter, and agency personnel to stay abreast of issues and needs. • Coordinates with youth services and youth shelter to facilitate **youth** access to education

District Contact Information	Program Description and Promising Practice Highlights
Chicago Public Schools, Illinois Mary Kelly Dowd – Coordinator Homeless Education Program Chicago Public Schools 125 South Clark Street, 10th Floor Chicago, Illinois 60603 (773) 553-2242 (773) 553-2182 fax Leslie Jones – Homeless Education Consultant Chicago Public Schools 125 South Clark Street, 10th Floor Chicago, Illinois 60603 (773) 553-2230 (773) 553-2182 fax	• **Promotes awareness** by sending two times a year *The Notice of the Chicago Public Schools Policy on Education of Homeless Children and Youth* to all CPS parents/guardians. • Mandatory **awareness raising** training program for approximately 500 schools. All district principals must attend a workshop on homeless education issues and service strategies, after which they must each train their entire school staff. • Comprehensive district manual **raises awareness** and serves as a single authoritative guide on all homeless education-related issues. The 66-page document addresses policy and law, school level requirements, standard district procedures and forms, and frequently asked questions. • Homeless education poster distributed to every school and must be prominently hung to **raise awareness** of parents and school staff. • All Chicago public schools have a **homeless liaison** and a clerk. Therefore, the Chicago Public Schools has 1,200 school personnel plus 600 principals who are specifically trained to work with issues pertaining to homeless education. • In 1999-2000, CPS committed over $2,100,000 from the district general budget, in addition to its McKinney-Vento funds, to ensure that homeless students have the appropriate **transportation**. • During the 2000-2001 school year, the CPS identified approximately 6,300 homeless children and youth. • Standardized forms and procedures for processing **transportation** requests and collecting related student data. District homeless student **database** tracks identification, enrollment, and school records. • All schools receive a "CTA Emergency Pack" for short-term homeless student **transportation** needs that includes student-rate public transportation passes, an adult pass for the parent of elementary student, and limited cash funds.

District Contact Information	Program Description and Promising Practice Highlights
Fort Wayne Community Schools, Indiana Jerry T. White Director of Student Services Fort Wayne Community Schools 1200 South Clinton Street Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802 (219) 425-7278 (219) 425-7501 fax Jerry.White@fwcs.k12.in.us George A Fields, Jr. Homeless Liaison Coordinator (219) 425-7788 (219) 425-7501 fax Fieldga01@excite.com Dawn D. Sterba Administrative Aide for Homeless Education and Title I (219) 425-7255 (219) 425-7722 fax	• Monthly newsletter provides updates on homeless education issues and **raises awareness** throughout the community. • Integrates the **transportation** of homeless students into existing districtwide school choice program, which nearly guarantees that they will remain in their **schools of origin**. • District liaison coordinates **transportation** with department of transportation. The district attempts to make shelter stops first in the morning and last at the end of the day in order to minimize stigmatization. • Most McKinney-Vento funds are used by Fort Wayne to support a **tutoring program**.

District Contact Information	Program Description and Promising Practice Highlights
Santa Cruz County Office of Education, California JoAnn Allen Director Homeless Education Outreach Program Santa Cruz County Office of Education 809 H Bay Avenue Capitola, California 95010 (831) 479-5246 (831) 476-5294 fax joallen@santacruz.k12.ca.us Karen Lemon Educational Coordinator (831) 477-5422 klemon@santacruz.k12.ca.us	• Two-page principal survey collects data on **in-school services** for homeless students, while simultaneously **raising awareness** of legal requirements. • Annual **awareness raising training** is attended by nurses and bus drivers, in addition to principals, teachers, social workers, and secretaries. • Co-creator and facilitator of the local **Homeless Action Network** of school, health, and social service providers. • Partners with local university to provide homeless students with **in-school tutoring services**. • Small-group and individual **counseling** for homeless students. • Homeless children receive a backpack with school supplies in it. • Drop-in educational center and extended-day programs for homeless **youth.** • Multi-disciplinary team developed strategies for serving homeless **youth.**
Victoria Independent School District, Texas Gail V. Brocklebank, LMSW-AP Community Specialist 102 Profit Drive P.O. Box 1759 Victoria, TX 77902 (361) 788-9905 (361) 788-9903 fax	• Guarantees all students may remain enrolled in, and be **transported** to, their **school of origin** through "One Child, One School, One Year" policy. • Every school has a parent liaison, who ensures **immediate enrollment** and coordinates **transportation** and **in-school services**. • **Tutoring program** for homeless students at 8 neighborhood Homework Centers. • Teen parenting program, "Students Taking Action and Responsibility" (STAR), helps identify **homeless youth** with children who lack permanent housing. The STAR liaison can help arrange **transportation** to school.

Appendix B

Organizations and Advocacy Groups: On-line Resources

Organizations and Advocacy Groups: On-line Resources

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
Children's Defense Fund 25 E St, NW Washington, DC 20001 (202) 628-8787 http://www.childrensdefense.org	Children's Defense Fund (CDF) began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundations, corporate grants and individual donations. CDF advocates for all children, but especially for those that are poor, minority, or disabled. The CDF web-site addresses the following: • Web-site links - this site has links to over 30 web-sites that address children's and homeless issues • Facts and Statistics - CDF reports on hardships faced by low-income youth and affordability of child care • Event Information – information about CDF's annual convention • Services Strategies and Activities - Parent Resource Network and listserves	• "The State of Children" - offers thoughtful analysis on youth violence, education, health care, poverty, etc. • "All Over the Map: A Progress Report on the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)" - ranks state progress in implementing CHIP and addresses other health insurance related topics • A newsletter about immigrant youth
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless 1325 South Wabash Suite 205 Chicago, IL 60605 (312) 435-4548 E-mail: info@chicagohomeless.org http://www.chicagohomeless.org	The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless organizes and advocates to prevent and end homelessness. • Service Strategies and Activities - lists Chicago-area initiatives, including those related to women and youth, task force and coalition groups, the Law Project and other initiatives • Facts and Statistics - causes of and statistics about homelessness and welfare reform	• A training manual for shelter staff and advocates on homeless children's educational rights
The Homeless Homepage (from	Run by an economics professor through the University of	N/A

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
Communications for a Sustainable Future) http://csf.colorado.edu/homeless/index.html	Colorado, this site presents links to approximately 500 international internet sites about homelessness. Its mission is "to enhance communications with the objective of working through disparate views and ideologies to secure a more promising future." The children and youth page offers links to homeless education sites.	
Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program 701 North Fairfax Street Suite 310 Alexandria, VA 22314-2064 (703) 706-9660 http://www.efsp.unitedway.org/	The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) began in 1983 with a $50 million federal appropriation. Congress created the program to meet the needs of hungry and homeless people. • Web-site Links to those organizations that receive funding from the EFSP, sponsor the EFSP, or address homeless issues with a focus on emergency aid	N/A
Health Care for the Homeless Information Resource Center 345 Delaware Avenue Delmar, NY 12054 (888) 439-3300 ext.247 E-mail: hch@prainc.com http://www.prainc.com/hch	The Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) program emphasizes a multi-disciplinary approach to delivering care to homeless persons, combining aggressive street outreach with integrated systems of primary care, mental health and substance abuse services, case management, and client advocacy. • Service Strategies and Activities - state by state directory of HCH projects	HCH publications generally focus on health related issues. • "Opening Doors" – a journal focusing on health care issue for low-income individuals • Annotated bibliography of publications with an emphasis on health

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
The Institute for Children and Poverty at Homes for the Homeless 36 Cooper Square, 6th Floor New York, NY 10003 (212) 529-5252 E-mail: hn4061@handsnet.org http://www2.homesforthehomeless.com/hfh	Homes for the Homeless, a non-profit organization, provides educational training services to homeless families and helps them build independent lives. The Institute for Children and Poverty provides information to educational institutions, policy makers, and the non-profit community through publications, symposia, training events and technical assistance. • Homeless Education Programs - educational programs for homeless youth including, Jump-Start Child Development Centers, Accelerated After School Programs for homeless youth, recreational and cultural programs, and educational summer camps • Web-site Links - over 50 links to national, private and non-profit agencies that address homelessness, housing, health, education, literacy and youth issues • Facts and Statistics – federal statistics about homelessness and homeless youth including demographics and causes of homelessness • Service Strategies and Activities – offers programs on adult education and literacy, employment training and job placement, and independent living	• "Access to Success: Meeting the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Families" • Children's books about homelessness • Journal of Children and Poverty - offers a forum for the presentation of research and policy initiatives in the areas of education, social services, public policy, and welfare reform as they affect children, youth and families in poverty. • Full reports and books about homelessness, foster care, case studies of homeless families, and demographics of homeless families

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
Illinois's Opening Doors Program Illinois State Board of Education 100 North First Street Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001 (217)782-3370 http://www.lth3.k12.il.us/openingdoors	Opening Doors is an Illinois State Board of Education subgrant project funded through the McKinney-Vento Act. The goal of this statewide initiative is to raise awareness in Illinois schools and shelters of the educational rights and needs of homeless children and youth. The Opening Doors web site is a key resource for learning about homeless education in Illinois. • Law and Policy – gives descriptions of laws and policies regarding homelessness and advice for parents of homeless youth • Web-site Links – links to project partners, McKinney-Vento grant recipients, Illinois agencies that address homelessness, Illinois shelters • Contact Information – for Illinois schools, shelters, homeless programs and other resources • Facts and Statistics – a composite picture of homelessness in the U.S.; demographic data on homeless youth • Service Strategies and Activities – information for school personnel to understand youth homelessness and issues they may face; educational programs to increase awareness about homelessness • Event Information – lists conferences that address homelessness and education of homeless children	Through their on-line ordering form, Opening Doors offers over 30 printed documents ranging from an overview of homeless education law to activities for hunger and homelessness awareness week. Some examples are: • "Lunch Box News" – booklet of strategies for teachers and school personnel • Tip sheets for secretaries, teachers, principals, support service staff, shelter staff, and nurses • "School Notification Form" for shelters to submit to schools • "Should My Child Change Schools If We Become Homeless" • Overviews of and guidance related to federal and state laws and policies • "Where Can I Build My Volcano" – a story about homelessness from a child's perspective Opening Doors also offers several videos on promising practices for educating homeless children and youth and homelessness issues.
Iowa's Center for Homeless Education and	Iowa's Center for Homeless Education and Information and	The following are provided on the Center for Homeless

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
Information at William Penn College 201 Trueblood Avenue Oskaloosa, IA 52577 (515) 673-1113 http://www.wmpenn.edu/PennWeb/LTP/LTP2.html	The web-site is designed to provide information and resources for service agencies and educators of homeless families and youth. • Homeless Education Programs - Literacy Tutoring Program matches college students with at-risk homeless youth for tutoring opportunities; CAMP VISION is a summer camp for homeless children • Web-site Links – to the University of Wisconsin Campus Homeless Project, The Homeless Home Movie, the Iowa State Homepage, and The National Center for Homeless Education • State and Local Resources – lists organizations, publications, and resource guides • Facts and Statistics – "Homelessness in Iowa" and "Homeless in America" provide statewide and nationwide survey results from a study of homeless families and youth	Education and Information web-site: • Iowa Department of Education Materials – list of materials for school personnel that deal with homelessness • "Homelessness: A Resource Guide for Grades K-12" – curriculum and lesson plans that deal with homelessness • "Shelter Boy" - FOX television documentary video about a homeless student in Omaha • List of publications dealing with education of homeless youth as well as resources for teachers and administrators that serve homeless students • List of McKinney-Vento Act programs in Iowa
Missouri Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program **Missouri Department of Education** Division of Instruction – Federal Discretionary Grants Amy James, Supervisor (573) 522-8763 http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divinstr/fedprog/discretionarygrants/homeless/index.html	The Missouri homeless education program. • Law and Policy – describes the McKinney-Vento Act and compulsory attendance and residency requirements • Service Strategies and Activities – includes standards and criteria used to evaluate district implementation of the homeless education program; describes what steps are taken by school districts to provide appropriate instruction for their homeless students	• "Keeping Kids in School: the Educational Rights of Homeless Children" – this is a 40-page comprehensive manual published in 2000 to ensure that homeless children receive the education they are legally entitled • Training manual, poster, booklet and video • Sample enrollment form • Homeless program checklist and standards of program compliance

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH) 1518 K Street, NW, Suite 206 Washington, DC 20005 (202) 638-1526 naeh@naeh.org http://www.naeh.org	The National Alliance to End Homelessness is a nonprofit membership organization whose mission is to mobilize individuals and the nonprofit, profit and public sectors of society to end homelessness. The Alliance is composed of over 2,000 members and its primary goal is to increase federal resources for permanent housing and support services. It also works to improve federal policy on related issues. • Homeless Education Programs – age appropriate fact sheets to educate the general student population about homelessness • Law and Policy – describes some of the policies and laws that effect homelessness in the U.S. • Facts and Statistics – demographics of the homeless population, causes and solutions to homelessness • Service Strategies and Activities – lists organizations and people under "best practices and profiles" that deal with homelessness • Event Information – links to articles about news and events regarding homelessness, housing, services, trainings and conferences	• Life Skills Manual • Fact Sheet for Kids • Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness • The Alliance - monthly newsletter for service agencies about homelessness

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NASCEHCY) http://www.tenet.edu/OEHCY/NASCEHCY.html	The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) is an association of state coordinators with responsibility for implementing Subtitle VII B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. State coordinators of homeless education work to ensure that children and youth residing in homeless situations receive equal access to appropriate educational services and to effect systemic changes within the educational system that help to foster the academic success of homeless children and youth. • Contact Information – provides a list of state coordinators of the Education of Homeless Youth and Children programs	This web-site has a links to: • "Making the Grade: Challenges and Successes in Providing Educational Opportunities for Homeless Children and Youth, the 1996 Position Document of the NASCEHCY". Summarizes the history and progress of efforts to educate homeless children and youth, profiles 30 selected state homeless education programs, and offers recommendations for improving the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program. The more recent incarnation of this group, the NAEHCY, collaborated with the National Coalition for the Homeless to update "Making the Grade" in 1999.
National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) 915 Northridge Street 2nd Floor Greensboro, NC 27403 (800) 755-3277 dbowman@serve.org http://www.serve.org/nche	NCHE, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is a national resource center for research and information addressing the education of homeless children and youth. It serves state and district administrators, teachers, lawyers, social service providers, parents, researchers, and others by disseminating information, making referrals, synthesizing research, and facilitating collaborations. This web-site is comprehensive and a good resource for information on homeless education. Web-site topics include: • Homeless Education Programs - state and local McKinney-Vento program profiles; requests for proposals addressing homeless education • Law and Policy - the McKinney-Vento Act • Web-site Links – The NCHE web site provides links to just about every organization involved in homeless education, including state homeless education programs; homeless housing organizations; legal organizations; advocacy groups; research organizations; education networks and organizations; ERIC clearinghouse; and resources for homeless families and children	NCHE has developed four products; order forms may be downloaded from the website: • "The Education of Homeless Children and Youth: A Compendium of Research and Information" – includes issues such as legislative and policy issues, educational considerations, community support structures, the education of homeless children and youth, and an annotated bibliography • "Parent Pack" - a folder for the storage and transfer of school records • Proceedings from the National Symposium on Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth -- includes an overview of the issue, legislation, and strategies to address the issue • Parent brochure "What You Need to Know to Help Your Child Do Well in School" -- includes educational rights of homeless children, questions for homeless parents to ask at school, NCHE contact information, and space to include local contact information
National Center for Homeless	• Contact Information – current state coordinators of homeless	The NCHE web-site provides an annotated list of

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
Education (NCHE) (Continued)	education • State and Local Resources - NCHE has a Help Line (800-308-2145), through which individuals can request information on resources for homeless children and families • Facts and Statistics - NCHE provides overview information on issues related to homelessness and the education of homeless children and youth	publications, which can be accessed by topic area, as well as links to other documents and resources, including: • Awareness raising • Research reports on homeless education, housing, law, and welfare • Books on homeless education • Curricula and resources kits for teachers and tutors • Legal sources • Products to aid education. NCHE is an Adjunct to ERIC Clearinghouse on Homeless Education. As such, it is the central repository for publications and materials related to homeless education and submits the documents to the ERIC Clearinghouse.
National Coalition for the Homeless 1012 Fourteenth Street, NW, #600 Washington, DC 20005-3410 (202) 737-6445 or 737-6444 E-mail: nch@ari.net http://nch.ari.net/	The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH) is a national advocacy network of homeless persons, activists, service providers, and others committed to ending homelessness through public education, policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, and technical assistance. NCH receives its support from individual contributions, the Combined Federal Campaign, foundation grants, special events, and telemarketing. • Law and Policy – Legislative Alerts inform viewers about current legislative issues that may affect the homeless or agencies that serve them; describes the McKinney-Vento Act and other issues regarding homelessness • Web-site Links – lists web-sites for a variety of agencies that serve the homeless including a directory of state contacts for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth	NCH provides the following literature on their web-site: • "Making the Grade: Successes and Challenges in Educating Homeless Children and Youth" – • "Safety Networks" – this NCH newsletter provides updates on trends and policies surrounding homelessness at the local, state, and national levels with emphasis on federal activity; public education; information on NCH activities; conference listings, etc. • List of publications about homelessness from various sources that may be ordered through NCH

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
National Coalition for the Homeless (Continued)	• Facts and Statistics – about homelessness and why people become homeless • Service Strategies and Activities – NCH projects touch on the many issues that deal with homelessness including the Educational Rights Project that addresses the education of homeless youth	
National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty 918 F Street, NW #412 Washington, DC 20004 (202) 638-2535 E-mail: nlchp@nlchp.org http://www.nlchp.org	The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty was established in June 1989. It is governed by a seventeen-member board of directors that includes lawyers, activists, researchers, and individuals who have experienced homelessness. The Law Center pursues three main strategies: impact litigation, policy advocacy, and public education. • Facts and Statistics about homelessness	The Law Center provides fact sheets and reports on policies and legislative issues regarding homelessness.
New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students Equity Support Services/Eastern Suffolk BOCES 969 Roanoke Avenue Riverhead, New York 11901 (631) 208-2072 E-mail: NYSTEACHS@sricboces http://nysteachs.sricboces.org/	The New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students is a New York State Education Department grant project under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Program. The fundamental objective is to provide technical assistance to school districts throughout New York State in establishing equitable education services for students affected by homelessness. • Law and Policy – describes some of the policies and legislation that effect the homeless including policies that influence the education of homeless children; describes the McKinney-Vento Act • State and Local Resources – lists NY state health and education departments and their programs as well as other resources • Event Information – current listings of NY conferences and grants	This web-site provides many articles that address the education of homeless children and youth. These include: • "Will Their Future Be Different?" – a survey of state homeless education programs conducted in 1997 • "Making the Grade: Success and Challenges in Educating Homeless Children and Youth" - The and Youth. • The McKinney-Vento Act and guidelines for school personnel to meet McKinney-Vento Act requirements • Tip sheets for school personnel and service agencies that serve the homeless
New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students		

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
(Continued)		• Resources for schools to address needs of homeless students
North Dakota's Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program 600 East Boulevard Ave Bismarck, ND 585505-0440 (701) 328-3265 http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/title1/homeless/index.shtm	The Educational Program for Homeless Children and Youth is administered by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. • Homeless Education Programs – "Homeless Awareness Week" provides educators with information, lesson plans, and activities to educate the general student population about homelessness • Law and Policy – describes the McKinney-Vento Act and how North Dakota is meeting the requirements of that Act • Contact Information – lists contact information for North Dakota McKinney-Vento funds recipients • Facts and Statistics about homeless children and youth	As a part of the "Homeless Awareness Week Packet" this site offers the following resources: • "Five Thing You Can Do to Help Homeless Youth" – a guide for school personnel • Five videos about homeless youth • Poster about homelessness • Lesson plans • Survey results from the 1999 homeless education survey of principals
Pennsylvania Department of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program 333 Market Street, 5th Floor Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333 (717) 772-2813 http://www.pde.psu.edu/homeless/esedhomech.html **Pennsylvania Department of Education**	The Pennsylvania Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program offers information on: • Homeless Education Programs - contact information and profiles of local McKinney-Vento programs • Law and Policy - includes links to Basic Education Circulars (BECs), which provide policy guidance related to homeless education in Pennsylvania • Facts and Statistics - Pennsylvania homeless population; state program findings; frequently asked questions • Service Strategies and Activities - addresses how the state intends to meet its goals	The Pennsylvania homeless education program web-site includes links to Basic Education Circulars (BECs), which provide policy guidance for Pennsylvania districts and schools on the following topics: • The education of homeless students • School immunization regulations • Acceptable evidence of student age • District obligations for students not residing with their natural parents • Access to student records and enrollment The website also makes other publications available through phone order, including:

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
(Continued)		• Overviews of the state of Pennsylvania's homeless education program • Pennsylvania shelter and district contact information • School staff training materials • Curriculum guide on homelessness
South Dakota Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Department of Education and Cultural Affairs 700 Governors Drive Pierre, South Dakota 57501 (605) 773-5669 http://www.state.sd.us/deca/ta/programs/Homeless/STEWARTB.HTM	The South Dakota Department of Education and Cultural Affairs oversees the McKinney-Vento grants awarded in South Dakota. This web-site provides: • Website Links – links to state and federal sites about homelessness including nutrition, education, health, housing, employment, transportation, immigration, family planning, etc. • Contact Information – to the two McKinney-Vento sites in South Dakota; lists South Dakota shelters	South Dakota's Department of Education and Cultural Affairs offers the following materials on homelessness: • Seven videos about homeless youth, some produced by the South Dakota Department of Education, the Sioux Falls Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, and other states' Department of Education Offices Brochures and flyers for raising awareness of homelessness and youth
Texas Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth 2901 North IH-35, Austin, Texas 78722-2348 (512) 475-9702 Toll-free in Texas: 1 (800) 446-3142 http://www.tenet.edu/OEHCY/ http://www.tenet.edu/shelters also see: http://www.utdanacenter.org **Texas Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (continued)**	The Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (OEHCY), which is housed at the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas-Austin, serves as the Texas state homeless education program. • Law and Policy – describes the McKinney-Vento Act and Texas state law on education the of homeless children and youth; it also describes the rights of homeless children related to free and reduced lunch, transportation, special education services, and other educational programs • Web-site Links – links to state and federal web-sites that address homelessness and/or education • Contact Information – provides contact information for Texas school districts that received McKinney-Vento grants The Dana Center develops resources and provides technical assistance to strengthen Texas education and community life. Funded through private and government grants, the Dana Center	OEHCY provides the following resources: • Campus Self-Assessment Guide - a self-assessment tool that schools can use to determine the adequacy of their current services to students in homeless situations • "Pieces of the Puzzle: Creating Success for Students in Homeless Situations" - a manual and videotape training tool for raising awareness, understanding homelessness, and developing ways to overcome educational barriers for students experiencing homelessness. • "Questions and Answers on the Education of Students in Homeless Situations" - a document that addresses the most commonly asked questions about homeless education • Project brochure and poster outlining homeless

Organization	Organization Description and Web-Site Topics	Selected Publications/Products
	lists OEHCY as one of its programs. • Service Strategies and Activities – A Dana Center project entitled Support for Homeless Education: Linking Technology Resources to Shelters (SHELTRS) provides computers and tutors for homeless children at Austin shelters. • Event Information - offers a variety of workshops and conferences on educating poor and minority students, as well as other educational issues	students' educational rights and resources • As of June 2001, the OHECY will release a new document that outlines best practices in homeless education programs throughout Texas
Virginia's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Project HOPE The College of William & Mary School of Education P.O. Box 8795 Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795 (757) 221-4002 Toll Free in Virginia 1-877-455-3412 http://www.wm.edu/education/HOPE/Homeless.html	The Virginia Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program. • Law and Policy – describes Virginia policies that affect homelessness; history of the McKinney-Vento Act • Web-site Links – federal, state, non-profit and private funding resources; local McKinney-Vento subgrantees • Facts and Statistics – estimates of the number of homeless in Virginia	N/A

Appendix C

Selected Recent Publications

Selected Recent Publications

Anderson, L.M., Janger, M.I., & Panton, K.L.M. (1995). *An evaluation of state and local efforts to serve the educational needs of homeless children and youth* (page xi). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

The Better Homes Fund. (1999). *Homeless children: America's new outcasts.* Newton, MA: Author.

Bunn, S. (2000). *Admission of students to Oregon Public Schools: Guidance for schools and districts.* Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Education.

California Department of Education. (1999). *Enrolling students living in homeless situations.* Sacramento, CA: Author.

Children's Defense Fund. (1998). *The state of America's children, yearbook 1998.* Washington, DC: Author.

Connecting Title I and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act: Providing services for homeless children and youth. (2000, May). *Title I Monitor, (5)5.*

Fosburg, L.B., & Dennis, D.L. (Eds.). (1999). *Practical lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research.* Prepared for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Homes for the Homeless and the Institute for Children and Poverty. (1999). *Homeless in America: A children's story.* New York: Author.

The Institute for Children and Poverty, Homes for the Homeless. (1999). *Homeless in America: A children's story, Part one.* New York: Author.

The Institute for Children and Poverty, Homes for the Homeless. (1998). *A snapshot of family homelessness across America.* New York: Author.

Lowe, E. T. (2000, December). *A status report on hunger and homelessness in America's cities, 2000: A 25 city survey.* Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Mayors.

Marek, L.I., Mancini, LA., & Brock, D.J. (2000). *Continuity, success, and survival of communitybased projects: The National Youth At Risk Sustainability Study.* Richmond, VA: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Markowitz, J. (1999, December 5-7). *Educating children with disabilities who are homeless* (proceedings document) [Policy Forum]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

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Appendix D

Questions and Answers Guide on the Education of Children and Youth In Homeless Situations:

Special Education and the Homeless Student

Appendix D
Questions and Answers Guide on the Education of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations
Part 5: Special Education and the Homeless Student

Texas Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
July 1999

As defined by federal law, the purpose of Special Education is to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free, appropriate public education that includes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs. Additionally, it is the intent of the law to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected and to assist states and localities in providing for the education of all children with disabilities and to assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate those children.

5.1 What is required of special education programs related to the education of students in homeless situations?

Not all homeless students are students with disabilities. However, some homeless children and youth are students with disabilities and are not receiving appropriate special education services. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, each school district is required to have policies and procedures in effect to ensure that all children with disabilities residing in the district and all homeless children with disabilities enrolled in the school district who are in need of special education and related services are identified, located, and evaluated.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that districts annually undertake to identify and locate every qualified person with a disability residing in the district's jurisdiction that is not receiving a public education. The Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights for the U.S. Department of Education (in a letter to the Chief State School Officers dated October 15, 1990) drew attention to the need to conduct child find activities to identify unserved children with disabilities who are homeless. Also, because Section 722(g)(4) of the McKinney-Vento Act requires that each homeless child be provided services comparable to those offered to other students, school districts must ensure that each homeless child has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to children who are not homeless.

5.2 Should all students experiencing homelessness be referred for special education evaluation?

No. Homeless students must be referred and evaluated for special education on the same basis as non-homeless students. The school district should consider the individual educational needs of homeless students and make a determination regarding a referral for a special practitioners outside the school district to expedite a homeless student's evaluation education evaluation on the same basis and in the same manner it makes determinations regarding the referral of nonhomeless students for special education evaluations.

5.3 Is there any provision to treat homeless children differently from other students regarding receipt of special education services?

No. Homeless children should be granted the same rights, privileges, processes, and services as children who are not homeless.

5.4 If a homeless student who is receiving special education services from a school district leaves the school district and enrolls in a new school district, can the new school district begin providing special education services immediately?

Yes. According to 19 TAC §89.1050(e), for a student who is new to a school district, the student's Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee may meet when the student registers and the parents verify that the student was receiving special education services in the previous school district or the previous school district verifies in writing or by telephone that the student was receiving special education services. Special education services that are provided immediately by the new school district (based on confirmation that the student was receiving special education services in his or her previous school district) are temporary, contingent upon receipt of valid evaluation data from the previous school district or the collection of new evaluation data. A second meeting of the student's ARD committee shall be held within 30 school days after the first ARD committee meeting to finalize or develop a new Individual Education Plan (IEP) based on the evaluation data.

5.5 Can the evaluation of a homeless student for eligibility for special education services be given precedence over pre-existing referrals of other non-homeless students?

Yes. The policy establishing the sequence in which students are referred or tested is generally developed by the local school district, without guidance from the state or federal government. Unfortunately, many homeless students may not have been determined to be eligible for special education services because they have not remained in any district long enough to complete the referral and evaluation process. Hence, districts are encouraged to expedite evaluation of a homeless student for special education services. School districts that have a backlog of special education evaluations may contract with qualified

5.6 If a homeless student moves prior to the completion of the referral and assessment process, can the student's new school district simply complete the unfinished portion of the process or is it necessary to reinitiate the referral process?

Once the new school district has received the student's special education referral and evaluation packet, the new school district may resume the process where the former school district left off. However, the new school district is permitted to take the full 60 days to complete the process, as provided by law. Because of the transitory nature of students in homeless situations, districts are encouraged to expedite the process.

5.7 Can a student experiencing homelessness under the age of 18 who does not have a parent or legal guardian participate in special education?

Yes. The school district may, in special circumstances, appoint a surrogate parent to act on the child's behalf in matters relating to special education and related services. However, the state and federal laws that authorize a surrogate parent to act on behalf of a child on matters dealing with the identification, evaluation, and educational placement vary according to the circumstances. It is important to make certain that the child's legal guardian or surrogate parent has the legal authority necessary to sign consent forms for special education issues:

5.8 **Must a district provide transportation for a physically disabled homeless student who lives within the two-mile limit but is unable to use conventional transportation methods?**

Yes, if the student's ARD committee determines that transportation is necessary for the student to receive educational benefits.

5.9 **If a physically disabled homeless student is initially assigned to a campus that is not equipped to meet the student's special education needs, what is the maximum length of time that may pass before the school district must provide transportation to another school?**

The student must be placed appropriately as soon as is reasonably possible, and modifications to accommodate the student's needs in the current placement must be made until the placement is changed.

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